Vol 18 No. 1
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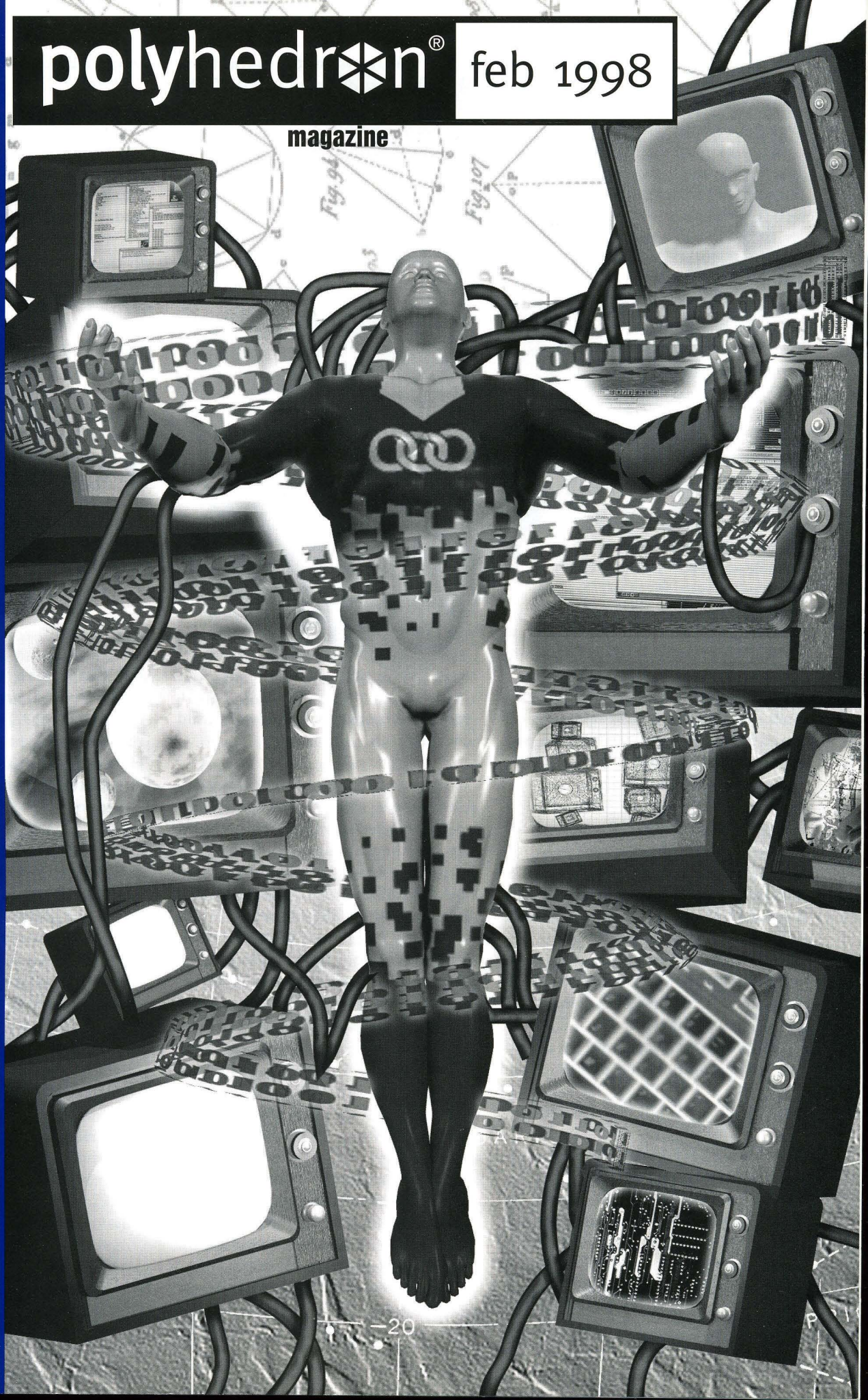
Any sufficiently advanced technology...

CONTENTS:

Your Initiative	2
Notes from HQ	3
Table Talk	5
Elminster's Everwinking Eye	6
City Stories	8
Visit the Verge	12
PBeM Games	14
Character Generation Programs	17
Robots For Dummies	20
Virtual Seattle Update	22
Decathlon Winners	24
Chaos Marks	26
Powers That Be	28
Conventions	30
Classifieds	31
Playtesting	32

...will be very expensive to fix.



your initiative

The mailbag is slim this month. Help me out people.

Dear POLYHEDRON,

I just received the latest issue of your magazine and I must say I am very [impressed] with the improvement in your fine publication!

In the Notes From HQ section, I couldn't help but notice the listing of the people involved as being some of the main characters from the Christmas classic, *Year without a Santa Claus*. It's one of my all time favorites, which I actually own.

My question is this: who of Donna Woodcock and Paul Alan Timm is the number one elf, Jingle, and who is the number two elf, Jangle!?

Thanks again for taking the reins of POLYHEDRON and continuing the roleplaying work we all appreciate and love!

David Barone
DJofCT@aol.com

Thanks for the kind words, David. I asked Donna and Paul who was elf number one and elf number two, but they just smiled knowingly. Those elves all look alike to me anyway.

Okay, here are a couple of questions for ya.

1. It has been stated that the publication is bi-monthly until a larger crowd is reached. What's the current level, and what's the target goal?

2. What are the details on forming your own group? (As you may be able to tell, I'm gonna try and get some of mi amigos to join the club.)

3. With the adventure we get once a year, is that starting in '97 or '98?

JoeGK@aol.com

I love numbered questions! Here's answers for ya.
1) The intermediate goal is 14,000. At that point we get a Poly annual, and some unspecified gee-gaws. We don't know yet, but they'll probably be cool.
2) Muy bien. We have a handy "all about clubs" document for the asking from HQ. Email us or download it off the website.
3) That starts now. If you joined at the GEN CON® Game Fair '97, you got the adventure, *Star of Kolhapur*, then. If you didn't, you'll get it when you renew before the game fair in '98. If you're a multi-year member and don't need to renew any time soon, we'll send it to you in the month your renewal would have come up.

To whom it may concern:
I have been an RPGA member for roughly ten years, and recently extended my membership as a GUILD-LEVEL™ member. I would greatly like to get in touch with Ed Greenwood, and slade (who recently left TSR) as well.

Would you please write me their email addresses, postal addresses, or other means by which to contact them? Or would you be able to forward a letter to each of them if I sent letters to you? Thank you.

sincerely,
Jean-Philippe Suter
Randolph, NJ

We get letters like this every once in a while, so I thought I'd address the topic. Almost every game designer loves to hear from fans, but they would all kill me if I gave out their addresses.

However, we at HQ can get letters to virtually anyone, especially if they're TSR people (heck, Jonathan Tweet sits about four feet away from me these days).

Just send a letter to Ed or slade or whoever, in care of us at the RPGA Network, (Box 707, Renton, WA 98057) and we'll forward it for you. I make no promises about anyone writing back, but I can pass them on.

If you would not mind, could you send me some AD&D spells for the game. It is boring without it. I would also like some Dragonlance player info, you know creature make-up and races. If you could send this to me it would be much appreciated.

Ray Barbknecht
raybar@win.bright.net

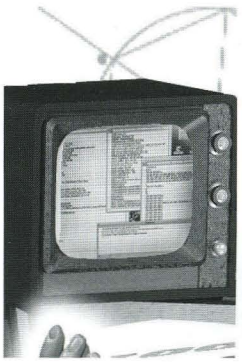
Ray, I know for a fact that you can subscribe free to *Legends of the Lance*, the newsletter for Dragonlance fans. You can snail mail your address to Miranda Horner at TSR, or sign up on the web at: <tsr.com/games/dl5a/dl5a.html>.

If you want spells for AD&D, offhand I'd recommend the Wizard's Spell Compendium. This four-book series collects every spell TSR printed anywhere up through 1995. You can find 'em at any game store (and we have a huge list of stores on the back of this issue, so no excuses!)

If anybody wants to help Ray out with homebrew spells or something, go at it.

—JEFF

COVER STORY: Turn on, jack in, drop out. Wunderkind Corey Macourek put together our technocover.



Notes From

New Year, New Offerings

The efforts of last year are culminating in some changes or additional options that we can offer you, the member. We have been working hard to solve the biggest problems preventing us from giving the best service possible, and we believe you will be happy with the results.

If there is something you would like to see changed in how the Network operates, feel free to email or write to us and we'll see what we can do. These solutions sometimes take time, but we get there.

New Tournament Policies

With the advent of the Tournament Ordering by Web application, we have changed the Tournament Request Policies so that more conventions and game days to run Network events with less trouble.

The first change is to the request deadlines. We have introduced a three-tier deadline structure, based on our ability to send out materials.

- Tournament requests received from the web-based ordering system can be received up to ONE MONTH before the convention start date, with no penalty. We email the tournament files, and have enough time to send scoring packets and prizes.
- Tournament requests received by paper mail must arrive in the office TWO MONTHS before the convention start date. If the request is at all late, tournament fees double. Consider this an incentive to use the web-based ordering system.
- Tournament requests with new events requested (as in submitted for the particular convention) must arrive in the office SIX MONTHS before the convention start date. All new events must arrive by that time as well. This applies whether you use the web-based ordering system or send the request via paper mail.
- We will not consider new events requested late without an agreement prior to the deadline.

The tournament fees are the same—$10 per round requested. You can run the tournaments as many times as you want during the convention dates. If the "number of tables" column is not completed, we assume you plan to run 10 tables. If you have to contact us later to have more scoring packs and prizes sent, we will charge you postage.

In addition, we have added incentives for timely return of scoring information:

- Convention packets are due four weeks after the convention. If you submit all the packets on time, then we will give you a credit of 10 cents per packet towards future orders. If you run 100 tables, this is $10 just for sending the packets back on time. No credit for unused packets, naturally.
- We have options available for conventions to enter the scoring data from the packets. If you do this using one of our approved programs, we will give you a credit of 20 cents per packet returned towards future tournament orders. Again, no credit for unused packets, though we'll happily take them back. You can get both credits, by entering the data and returning the data and packets within the four weeks.

We hope that by relaxing the requirements on tournament ordering, more people will be able to make use of this aspect of the Network.

New Database Capabilities

Our new database is nearing completion, and I'd like to brag a little about what it can do for you. We worked very hard to create a system that is easy to use and provides great benefits.

From the RPGA website, you can view your points history. Just go to the Guildhouse and log in. Whether you are a FELLOWSHIP-LEVEL™ or GUILD-LEVEL™ member, you can view your points. In addition, you can renew and correct your address online. Each account has a password on it, so that only you can view and change your personal information and points. If you have not tried this yet, go to the website and try it. Call customer service if you have password questions.

You can order Tournaments online for conventions and game days. Just go to the Tournaments Destination on the website and select "Order Tournaments." The process is simple:

1. Fill in your convention information. If you leave out a required field, the database will not let you proceed until you supply the information. Email address is required; when supplying an email address, pick one that can receive file attachments.
2. Select tournaments. You can see the blurb and play history of any active tournament, including how many tables have run at each convention. Warnings will occur if you select a tournament which has played in your state. Just check the boxes for the tournaments you want. You must select all the tournaments you want; the system will not let you just choose "any three LIVING CITY™ events" or the like.

   When requesting new events, enter their titles and authors in the spaces given for this information. You must enter full titles; "untitled" will not do anymore. We have to know what we are expecting. If you want to select events as Benefit, Master, Grand Master, or Paragon, check the appropriate box on the second screen.
3. Enter payment information. Credit cards are best, but you can submit the request and send a check by so indicating. Your request will not be approved until the check arrives. SSL

The Mighty Cray
TSR, Inc.

PowerMac 9600
Lisa Stevens

Pentium II
Robert Wiese

Hayes Compatible 55.6K
Customer Service

Toasters
Donna Woodcock
Paul Alan Timm

TRS-80
Jeff Quick

transmission will ensure (as well as possible) that your credit card info is not captured by some other user.

When your request is received, we will review and approve it, subject to the usual rules for tournament submission on number of events. Library events and blurbs will be emailed to the address provided in the request. New events will follow when they are sanctioned. Scoring packs, prizes, and FELLOWSHIP-LEVEL cards will be sent economy FedEx to the street address you provide.

Regional Directors have access to reports on members from their regions, including contact information and points. This allows RDs to serve you better.

New Value for Service Points

In the past, service awards, while nice, tended to be given for larger, more obvious service activities, while the many members who work conventions or otherwise help the Network got ignored. No longer. With the new points tracking, we have decided to put an emphasis on Service Points.

Service Points are now a new category, with their own levels. The levels change every 2,000 service points, unlike the player and judge levels, because requiring you to serve more just because you have served a lot before is nonsensical. We will not report your service levels on your card, but you can view your service points as part of your tournament history. You can earn service points for the following activities, provided they are Network related:

- Convention work, as a volunteer or tournament coordinator
- Community service work
- Charity work
- Playtesting, both product and RPGA tournaments
- Attending Network meetings called by HQ
- Recruiting new RPGA GUILD-LEVEL or Family members
- Responding to award ballots
- Completing the judge training program
- Writing tournaments which are sanctioned
- Having an article published in POLYHEDRON® Magazine

In addition, we award service points to our Regional Directors and those who do exceptional things for the Network. To receive service points in some cases, however, someone must tell us that you worked. Convention tournament coordinators should report their workers to HQ.

To reward service, we plan to send out something cool to those who have graduated to a new service level. We won't say what this is, or how frequently we will send anything out, but we do promise that the things we send will be cool and not available to the rest of the membership. So, if you work a lot for the Network, you can expect that the Network gift giver will visit your mailbox periodically.

New Resolution to Pay in a Timely Manner

The dark times caused quite a problem with contract payments. We are pretty sure that we paid everyone we owed, but we might have missed one or two. We'd like to rectify that.

If you signed a contract with RPGA for a tournament or POLYHEDRON article, received the twice-signed copy back from HQ, and have not received payment, please send a photocopy of the contract with both signatures to HQ with a letter asking for payment. If you have not signed a contract, but still think we owe you from 1997, contact HQ with the information on what you wrote.

If you wrote a tournament or POLYHEDRON article which appeared in 1998, you don't have to do anything. We will contract you soon.

New Summit Meeting

Come to the first RPGA Summit, a retreat for people who care about the Network and want to be involved in making decisions affecting its future.

During this weekend, tentatively set for October, we will discuss Network directions for the next few years, what programs we can offer, how the current programs can be improved, and more. Almost any topic will be open to discussion.

More than just discussion though, we will form teams to develop new programs or enhancements, so you can choose to work on what interests you. If you want a voice in Network planning for the future, come to this Summit.

The weekend will feature a schedule of discussions during the day, and free time and fun in the evening.

Ensemble Meetings: We will gather as a group to set our focus and discuss major issues. We'll also hear reports from breakout teams, and respond to those reports.

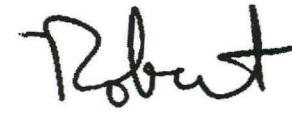
Breakout Sessions: We will break the real discussion of issues into smaller groups to better facilitate results. You choose the topics and participate in what you most value.

Games: Every evening during the retreat, we will gather for fun and free time. Part of this fun is gaming. We'll present three new Network events, and you can bring any other games you want, playtests of tournaments, board games, or whatever suits your fancy. There will be no registration for these games; we'll form groups each evening.

Free Discussion: In the Network staff room, we'll host open discussion in the evenings for anyone who wants to drop by. We'll provide snacks and sodas (think of it as a con suite). This is a relaxed time to discuss anything on your mind.

Because this summit is for you to get involved, we will solicit topics in the next few months. In April, we'll present more information on location and dates, and let you sign up. For now, talk about what we can make of this weekend and save money to attend.

Best regards until next time.



Thanks Box

Poly must look like a different magazine every issue, thanks to my fickle, amateur graphic tinkering. If this issue looks any better, thank TSR's newest graphic designer, Tanya Matson, who got the job of working with me to make Poly less of a graphic design chimp house. Thanks, Tanya.

Table Talk

Game Fair Charity Haul

Network members were amazingly generous at the GEN CON® Game Fair in 1997, raising nearly $13,000 for charities through auction and benefit play.

Benefit games at the game fair raised $960 for Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All other charities combined raised **$11,875.50 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation**, which helps give terminally ill children a chance to fulfill their fondest wish.

Thanks to everyone who gave even a little for helping to make an ill child's life more fun.

Decathlon Play Events Update

Here are the specific events for the Tournament Play portion of the Clubs Decathlon. More events will be announced or added as we receive information:

WINTER FANTASY™ Convention
Feb 26-Mar 1
Individual—Night of the Living Kender
Team—Scroll of Heaven

ConnCon
Mar 19-22
Individual—Things Worth Fighting For

Weekend in Ravens Bluff
April
Individual—Going Home

Ben Con
May 21-24
Individual—Secret Lives (placing in any of this event's three-rounds qualifies)

The New Guy

My name is Mark Middleton; I'm the new RPGA Volunteer Coordinator. That means I do a few things:
1) collect names/email of people wishing to volunteer, assign them a task, and track their work status (i.e. what assignment you have and did you finish).
2) assign work to people based on their interests and the needs of HQ. RPGA assigns me projects, then I fill them.
3) look for project coordinators. Projects will be coordinated by Robert Wiese, a current "coordinator," or me.

If you volunteer, I'll expect you to complete assigned tasks or request an extension *before* they're due. Assignments will start small, but you can expand. You can turn down a project for ANY reason, but if you turn down everything or don't answer email, I'll stop asking. And, if you abandon a project, you won't get other assignments.

The major job categories entail:
1) editors/publishers
2) scanners/proofers
3) historians
4) information collectors
5) data entry clerks

If you're interested in any of these areas, tell me your name, address, RPGA number, email address, cons attended, skills, special computer equipment (scanner), and how many hours per week you want to volunteer (give me a number between 1 and 10).

I expect to do most communication via the Internet, so email me at <mmiddlet@columbus.rr.com> if you're interested. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thermometer Blues

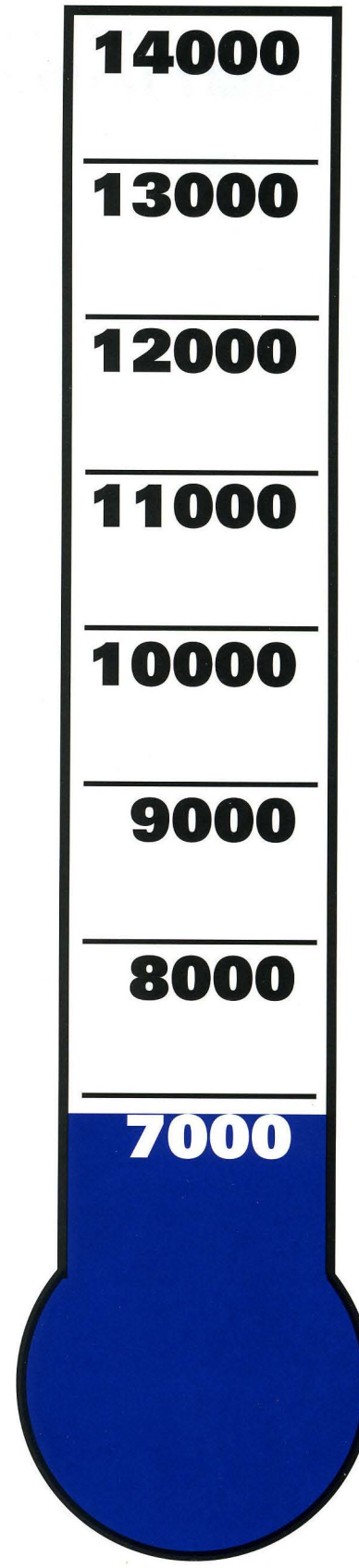
The thermometer is rising. People are finding out about the new Network. Due to ambitious prize-giving strategies though, we're postponing our membership drive kick-off until April. In the meantime, practice your sales pitch on family and pets. You'll want the stuff we're giving away.

NEXT ISSUE BOX

Rumble in the Jungle

Even MORE LIVING JUNGLE™ setting PC races

Go Ape! Poly expands to 48 Kong-sized Pages!



Elminster's Everwinking Eye

The Border Kingdoms

by Ed Greenwood

Irl

Nestled into a sheltering crescent of hills (the Crumblerock Crags, named for the treacherously soft rocks that adorn their weathered faces; climbers beware) is the quiet village of Irl. Its tile- and slate-roofed cottages squat amid woodlots and hedgerows. A traveler can be forgiven for thinking the entire settlement is somehow trying to hide from passersby.

Irl lies just west of the River Rith, due north of The Realm of the Mount. It boasts an inn as superb as any in haughty Sembia or cosmopolitan Waterdeep, "without the crowding but with the prices" (as the merchant Ithyngo of Athkatla put it). A traveler can't miss the three-story half-timbered mansion of many chimneys ("a hearth in every room") that houses The Bold Ki-rin.

The Rin (Excellent/Expensive) boasts a stables second to none. Its horsemaster, Ibbyn Albrot (LN hm F5), is skilled at identifying and treating equine ailments. The inn owner is the jovial ex-adventurer Brelmere Baerith (NG hm F11), and his dining room is famous for its roasts, wines, and succulent sauces.

Such luxury awaits in a quiet village thanks to Irl's main claim to fame: gems. The jewelers of Irl are reputed to be among the richest, most powerful humans in all Faerûn. A secretive, reclusive lot of hunched old men live here whose behind-the-scenes influence can move merchants of Sembia, Zulkirs of Thay, and nobles of Waterdeep to do things they'd rather not do.

The traveler (and there have been many, some coming to plunder, and others to kidnap) will find a shortage of impressively sinister, finely-robed esthetes in Irl; its jewelers have survived down the decades by living simply.

As the veteran adventurer Torbras of Westgate put it, "If you accost a barefoot laborer digging in the mud of a turnip field and glass golems suddenly lurch out of nearby sheds, or the columns of a barn come to life, and gemstones float out of the man's pockets to circle his head and spit lightnings at you—well, you've found one of the jewelers of Irl, and likely a swift end to your life, too!"

It's certain that many of the larger and wealthier Irlian families do have caryatid columns, stone guardians, or glass golems at their command, and descendants of apprentices of the mage Calagrath Halirl (from whose name "Irl" is derived) may carry gems that store attacking magics, and animate when activated. It's also certain that Irlians refuse to speak of such things; someone who asks to buy magical gems will be firmly shown the door of any shop in Irl.

Most Irlian shops feature jewelry (mainly earrings, pendants, anklets, and rings) set with rubies, emeralds, and moonstones (usually crown-cut, the local fashion). Azurite (a striated blue-green stone, abundant locally) is also sold carved into smooth "swirl-spiral" candle-holders, napkin rings, and "thumb-boxes" (named for their sliding lids, opened with the thumb while fingers of the same hand grasp the rounded container—often used to carry small quantities of powders).

Where the muddy village main street curves around the thrusting front of The Bold Ki-rin, a row of six well-established jewelry shops stands. Less famous establishments (whose proprietors may agree to buy stones of uncertain origin, or even sell raw or unset gems, things most Irlians utterly refuse to do) are to be found in their owners' cottages, along winding back lanes among orchards and sheep-paddocks. The names "Crysgrath Jalack" and "Ommer Uskyll" of Irl circulate among merchants interested in fencing shady gems or getting raw gemstone material, but gentle caution must be used while inquiring after these individuals, or exaggerated news of their deaths is likely to be gained rather than clear directions to them.

The best-known of the "old family" Irlian gemshops are The Black Bracelet, a pricey establishment with a blink dog guardian, run by two increasingly bony but once stunningly-

beautiful sisters, Kyadatha and Mrindurla Ephrost; The Moon In The Window, a shop reputed to have magical guardians and a watchful resident ghost (a watchghost, to be precise), run by the soft-spoken Shabadather clan; A Handful of Diamonds, the carving-house of the only Irlian to specialize in diamonds and avoid working local gems, the haughty gnome carver Ahrabbas Fendoun; Felderstone's Five Rings, run by the tall, untidy, red-haired ringmaker Eddoun Felderstone, famous for making ironguard rings for certain Sembian clients that burst into deadly shrapnel when he commanded them to do so from afar, after the Sembians wrote, refusing his fees; Galabather's Rain of Gold, the newest and most fashionable store, all glittering gold-set pectorals, masks, rings and bracelet in the latest Calishite styles, under many bright lamps tended with scented oils by the fussy and flamboyant Irpar Galabather; and The Serpent Biting His Tail, a small, dim shop divided diagonally by blue beaded curtains, where children and elders of the Tamuraleon family bring buyers trays of samples, and serve herbal teas that bring on visions.

The most powerful Irlian families are the Belingrosts and the Mammantals. The Ephrost, Gultulbar, Shabadather and Tamurleon clans are the "second-rank" houses, with the Irlingars rising and the once-proud Relingasters now little more than a memory. Their investments and influence reach as far as the ballads and tales claim, but Irlians seldom issue orders or otherwise inconvenience their debtors—except when wars or other major crises seem imminent.

Governmental decisions are made by the Eight-Sided Stone (a covert council whose members are elders of these eight families), but an outsider will find no way to contact them. They employ a Master of the Mace (Uldron Alvar, a LN hm F7) who commands eight Swords of Justice (armed police officers, F5s to F3s). These armsmen are battle-hardened former adventurers who wander Irl, observing attentively; little escapes their attention. They hate strife, and tend to be bad-tempered if they have to give battle. The village jail is two cells under a stable.

At the eastern edge of Irl is The Falcon's Leaning Watchpost, a bakery by day and tavern by night notable for its blackberry wine, gooseberry and spiceapple tarts, and for bread "shot through" with melted cheese. Some merchants detour through Irl just to dine at the Watchpost, never darkening the doors of any gemshop. Locals bring their problems and gossip alike to the plump, potato-faced proprietress, "Old Post" herself, Numbalaera Shuldasharee.

Irl also has a pond, Umathar's Water, where all are welcome to bathe or sprawl on the banks to chat, snooze, or laze. Years ago, dying Umathar decreed all could freely use his horsepond since his last horse had died ten summers before he took to his deathbed.

Minstrels and talkative Border tavern lads spin tales of labyrinthine storage tunnels underlying the gardens, cellars, and orchards of Irl, so vast and old that no one alive knows where all of them lead—and so crumbling that not a season passes without the ground near this or that cottage collapsing suddenly into a grave-like opening. Legend insists that the jewelers of Irl have secret storage caches behind false walls in these passages, and hidden exits that surface in stables, thickets, or via the gem-mines in the Crags behind Irl.

The most colorful local legend tells of the lost tomb of Calagrath Halirl, somewhere beneath Irl (perhaps deep beneath the front yard of the Ki-Rin itself, or the main street nearby). The Wizard of the Gems is said to float forever on his back in glowing, enchanted air above a sparkling bed of gems he enspelled before his death to preserve and defend his body for all time.

How long "for all time" will last in this case, and just how the gems protect Calagrath, are both (of course) unknown. Wild tavern tales abound about Calagrath awakening and hurling his own head at intruders which turns into a howling, flame-eyed skull the moment it leaves the glowing shaft of air above the gems, and about the jewels emitting rays that wither or disintegrate or incinerate.

Best of all for bards and adventurers, the two underlying tales are true. There are gem caches a-plenty under Irl. And somewhere Calagrath Halirl lies entombed in light above a bed of gems. Adventurers haven't found him recently and emerged to tell the tale, but as the years pass, they still come looking... ❑

Spend carefully son, or all too soon your life, your future—the very air you breathe will belong to the jewelers of Irl.

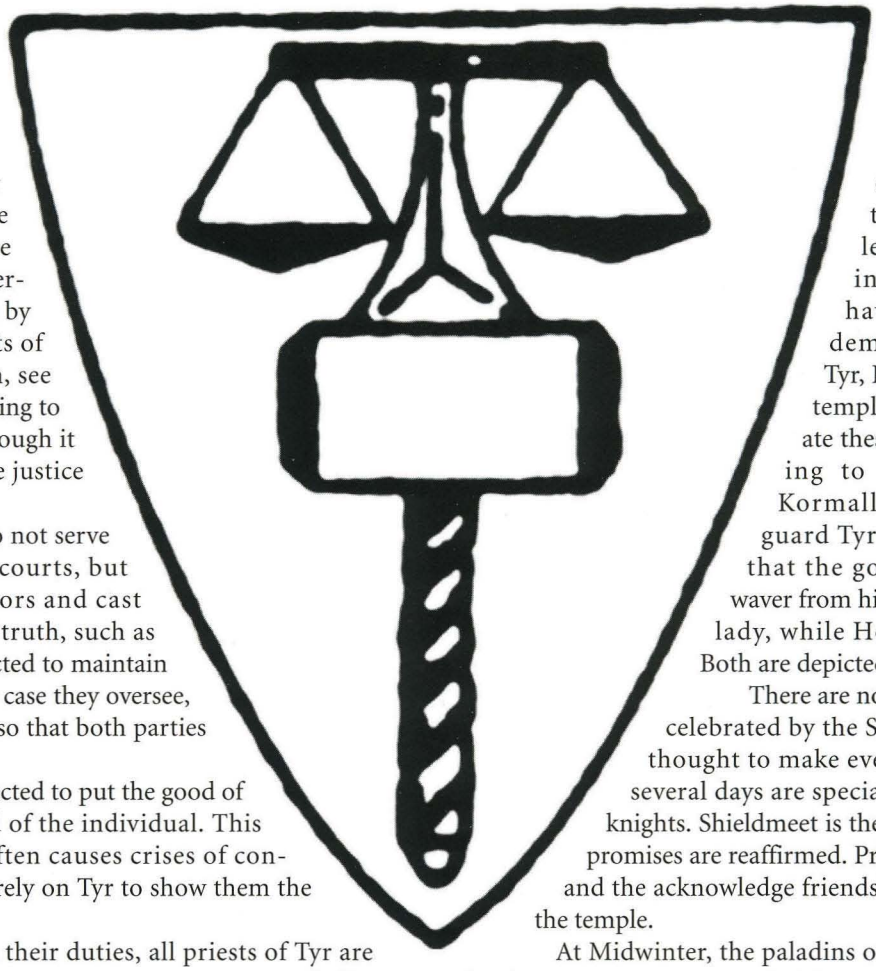
—**Halgolyn Wraithblade**
Knight of the Three Trees
in a letter to his son, Nathlas
Year of the Harp

City Stories

The Silver Halls: Tyr's Temple in Ravens Bluff

by Bobby Nichols

The god of Justice is worshiped in Ravens Bluff at the Silver Halls, an imposing structure with a silver-domed center section in the heart of the city. This is an apt location because the duties of the priesthood require close contact with citizens, and a symbol that justice should always be at the heart of one's endeavors. The temple is famed across the Vast for its legal library, one of the most complete in the Realms. It also serves as the home of the Right Hand of Tyr, the city knighthood attached to the temple.



Tyr occupies a place of prominence in the city due to the former Lord Mayor O'Kane's strong commitment to justice for all citizens. Most of the bureaucrats who run the city's departments venerate Tyr and hope to live by his precepts. The priests of the Silver Halls, in turn, see their primary duty as being to the government, for through it they can help guarantee justice to the faithful.

The priests of Tyr do not serve as judges in the city's courts, but they do serve as advisors and cast spells in the pursuit of truth, such as *detect lie*. They are expected to maintain a neutral outlook in any case they oversee, advising the magistrate so that both parties receive justice.

Yet they are also expected to put the good of the city above the good of the individual. This conflict in purposes often causes crises of conscience, but the priests rely on Tyr to show them the way.

In order to perform their duties, all priests of Tyr are expected to study law and systems of government, and all temples of Tyr are required to maintain extensive legal libraries for consultation. The Silver Halls' library is no exception, with treatises that reach back nearly 600 years for all the lands that surround the Sea of Fallen Stars.

The temple of Tyr is also expected to provide counsel to anyone accused of a crime. This duty is generally not enforced in cases where guilt is obvious, the accused is a known villain, or the Council of Lords decrees that no aid shall be provided. Because of this requirement, the temple allows some followers to study law without becoming priests. These law students act as counsel and help take the workload off the priests. The Tyrian priest or law student is not required to act as advocate for the accused, and indeed this would be seen as a violation of the basic tenet of the faith. In cases that come before the ecclesiastical courts, at least one of the three magistrates who hear the case must be a senior priest of Tyr.

The Silver Halls house the writings of Lord Harkus Kormallis, a famous paladin of Tyr and philosopher who wrote some 300 years ago. His writings dealing with honor and justice have become part of the canonical writings of the Silver Halls. Kormallis himself is held to be a role model for the followers of Tyr, and his deeds are told and retold in lessons. From the writings, the high prelates have "discovered" two demipowers in service to Tyr, Honor and Truth. Other temples of Tyr do not venerate these demipowers. According to the scrolls of Lord Kormallis, Honor and Truth guard Tyr's flanks, making sure that the god of Justice does not waver from his goals. Truth is a young lady, while Honor is an older man. Both are depicted in plate armor.

There are no public holy days of Tyr celebrated by the Silver Halls, as justice is thought to make every day holy. However, several days are special to the priests and the knights. Shieldmeet is the day when contacts and promises are reaffirmed. Priests reaffirm their vows and the acknowledge friendships with those outside the temple.

At Midwinter, the paladins of Tyr embark on a two-day fast that brings about a heightened state of awareness for Tyr's cause. It is not uncommon for a paladin to have visions during these days, and then to leave the temple on a holy quest.

Oathday, Marpenoth 16th, is the traditional day that new paladins of Tyr take their vows to the church and are publicly recognized as defenders of the faith.

With the death of Lord High Justicar, Sirrus Melandor during the Ravens Bluff war, Hykros Allumen, the current Reverend Judge, has temporarily assumed the duties of high priestly office. A new Lord High Justicar will be selected soon.

Hykros Allumen

human male Reverend Judge and 13th Level Specialty Priest of Tyr
age: 56
hair: black
eyes: brown

Hykros Allumen, a dark-skinned native of Turmish, came to Ravens Bluff more than 30 years ago as an adventurer. He fell in love the day of his arrival with the Lady Bellissa, daughter of a city noble. He gave up his wandering life and the two soon married. A year later, Hykros's son was born, Cambrin. Bellissa died soon after the birth. Hykros, now responsible for a child, entered the priesthood of the Silver Halls. He soon became the chief assistant to Sirrus Melandor, and then rose to lead the temple when Sirrus took up city office.

Hykros likes to manage everything himself, and so is a busy man. He is collecting the writings of Lord Kormallis into one document to define exact behavior for priests and paladins of Tyr. Anyone wishing to see Hykros usually sees his assistant, Vellura instead. When Hykros is seen, he is a pleasant if somewhat distracted man. His judgment is sound and never questioned.

Prior Vellura

human female 8th Level Cleric of Tyr
age: 29
hair: blond
eyes: green

Vellura is Hykros' personal assistant and information source for city happenings. She has done an admirable job thanks to her organizational skills. She studies governmental systems in her spare time, and is a foremost expert on the subject. Vellura is self-conscious about her youth, since there are several older priests who could occupy her position. Outgoing with followers and visitors, she is quiet in company of the other priests.

In recent months Vellura has become involved with Sir Byron Rednaw, a young merchant and baron. Vellura is flattered by his attentions, and spends time with him whenever she can.

Prior Cambrin Allumen

human male 8th Level Specialty Priest of Tyr
age: 29
hair: dark
eyes: blue

Cambrin is the pride of his father and a rising priest in Tyr's service. That Cambrin rises because he is Hykros's son is unnoticed by either of them, though the rest of the priests are aware of this injustice. Cambrin is uncomfortable with the expectations attached to being the high priest's son, and is not entirely happy in the temple's service. Though devoted to Tyr, he doesn't seek advancement or adventure. He would rather research legal cases than administer justice.

Cambrin is considered handsome by most of the Ravens Bluff socialites, but gets togue-tied in social settings. He has a crush on Talas Quickstrike, one of the paladins of the Right Hand of Tyr. Lady Talas is unaware of Cambrin's feelings.

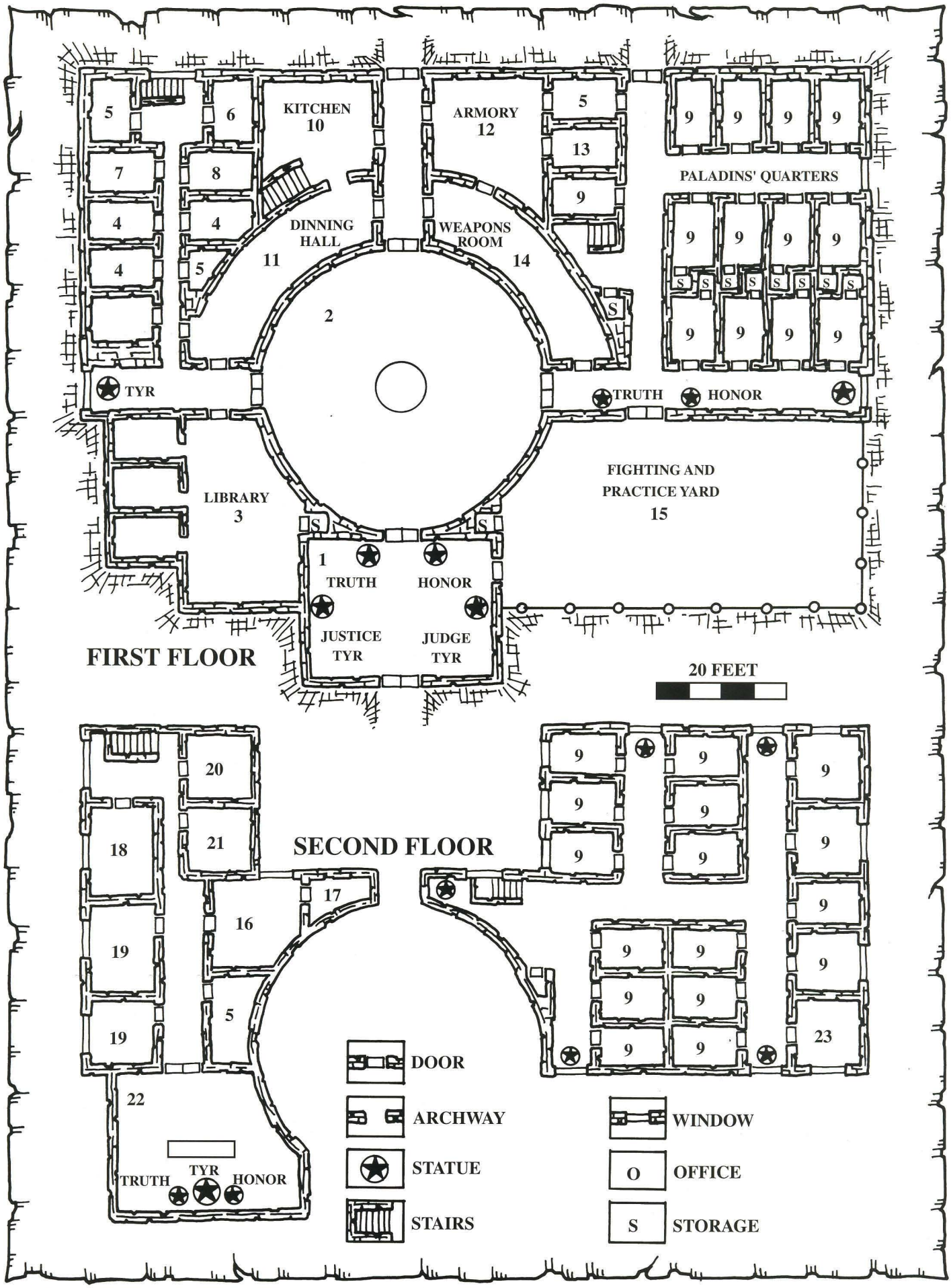
Suram DeVillars

human male 9th Level Paladin of Tyr
age: 63
hair: steel gray
eyes: brown

Suram DeVillars, the uncle of Lady Lauren DeVillars, is considered the black sheep of the family for choosing Tyr over Waukeen. Suram abdicated his birthright and roamed the Vast for years in Tyr's name. Now, he has returned to the Silver Halls to train younger paladins. He is a stern and unrelenting taskmaster, but a fine instructor.

Suram is tall and muscular, still able to best many younger and stronger challengers in jousts. He invariably carries the favor of some young lady into battle, usually a different lady each time. He is kind under most circumstances, with a strong desire for justice. Suram is a knight of the Right Hand of Tyr, one of the first, though not their leader.

Of the lesser ranked priests, Ollophin (hm P1) and Terance (hm P1) are newcomers. Their duties include kitchen help, polishing holy icons, keeping the temple presentable, and studying. Allaura (hf P2), has been in the temple about three years. She generally welcomes people in the outer sanctuary directing them to others who can help. Robert (hm P5) and Challarn (hem P4) perform lesser rites and the daily worship services for the temple. Branthorn (hm P6), the senior lesser priest, has the enormous responsibility of making sure the temple runs smoothly. He has recently felt the adventuring bug, so the temple currently seeks someone to replace him for a few years.


KITCHEN
10
ARMORY
12
PALADINS' QUARTERS
DINNING
HALL
11
WEAPONS
ROOM
14
2
TYR
TRUTH
HONOR
LIBRARY
3
FIGHTING AND
PRACTICE YARD
15
1
TRUTH
HONOR
JUSTICE
TYR
JUDGE
TYR
FIRST FLOOR
20 FEET
SECOND FLOOR
22
TRUTH
TYR
HONOR
DOOR
ARCHWAY
STATUE
STAIRS
WINDOW
OFFICE
STORAGE

A Brief Tour

The front door opens into the lesser sanctuary (1), a room draped in tapestries showing scenes of conflict and jousting, with Tyr's avatar in the background. The room is lit by *continual light* spells near the ceiling.

The lesser sanctuary boasts two statues of Tyr. The left one represents justice, with a set of silver scales painted on the figure's shield. Its eyes are covered with a blindfold. The one on the right represents Tyr as judge, dressed in the loose magistrate's robes.

At the far end lies the entrance to the main worship chamber of the Silver Halls. Two statues flank the silver doors: Truth and Honor. Truth's sword is sheathed and her helmet is carried under her left arm. Her gaze is stern and unyielding. Honor holds a shield and warhammer in a defensive position.

The main temple (2) is a large circular room with a 15' ceiling. The altar in the middle has a permanent illusion of large warhammer, with a set of silver scales resting atop it. The walls of this room are white and unadorned. The room is lit by *continual light* spells in recessed niches.

The famed library of the Silver Halls (3) is to the left of the main sanctuary. Open to all priests and students at the temple, it is protected by a modified *wyvern watch* that recognizes the priests. The writings of Lord Harkus Kormallis are kept in one of the small locked rooms off the library, and a senior priest must grant access to them.

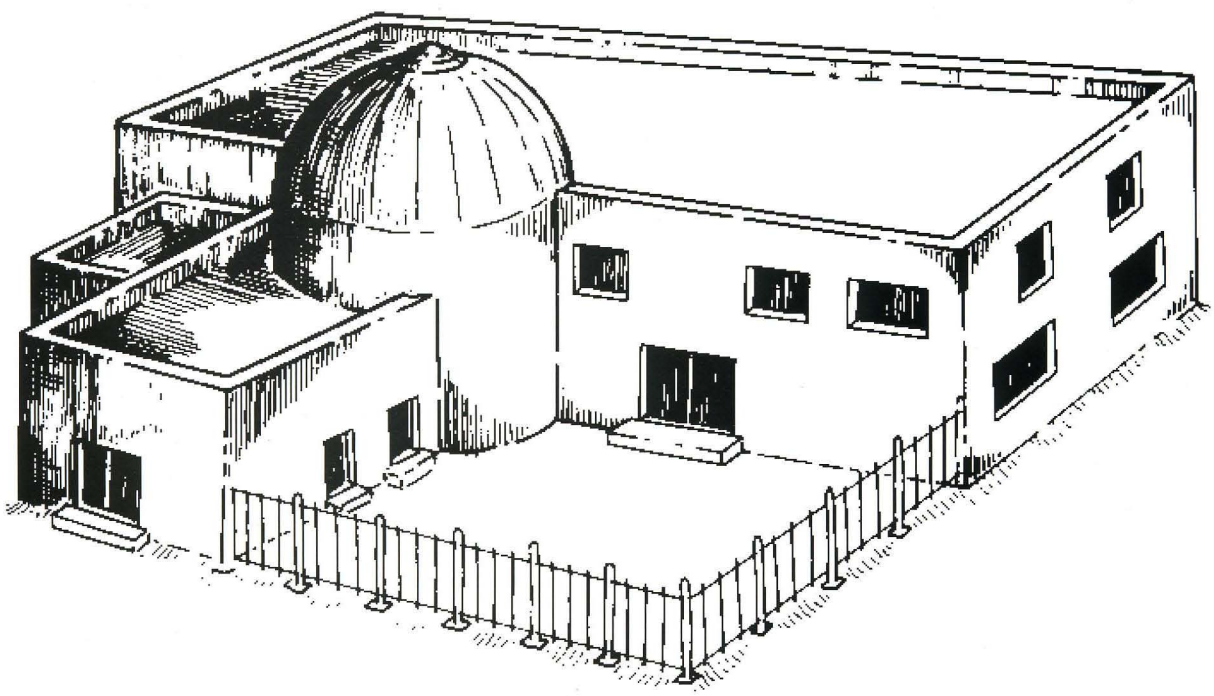
The temple offices (4) and the rooms of the lesser priests are opposite the library. Ollophin and Terance share a room (5), Robert and Challarn divide a room (7) and Allaura has a room (6). Branthorn, as the highest ranking underpriest has a room (8) to himself.

The wing to the right of the main sanctuary is dedicated to the Right Hand of Tyr. Their chambers and training facilities occupy two floors (9). Suram deVillars, one of the senior instructors, has a sparse room here (23). The training yard (15) is officially part of the knighthood's facilities, but the priests use it as well. It is open to the front so that children can watch the knights in training. The temple hopes to attract more converts this way.

The north annex, opposite the main entrance, contains the kitchen (10), cold storage cellar, and communal dining hall (11). There is also a forge (12), and the forge master has his own room (13) next to the forge. Adjacent to the forge is a large room (14) that serves as a display hall for the many weapons used over the Realms. This collection is a tribute to Lord Kormallis, who wrote that a prepared warrior is familiar with weapons of his adversaries. All paladins that train in the Silver Halls try to bring back a unique weapon to add to the collection.

The second floor of the east wing is closed to the general public. This is the higher ranking temple members' quarters. The former high priest's room (16) has a balcony where he can sit, read, and enjoy the sea breezes that blow off the Dragon Reach. Hykros Allumen's more lavish chambers (18) are decorated to display samples of his collection of fine wines. Prior Vellura's chambers (20) abound with trophies of her adventuring days, including a stuffed catoblepas head, a set of weapons from Kara-Tur, and a collection of jade figurines from the jungles of Chult. Prior Cambrin's chambers (21) are furnished with silk hangings and tapestries. Cambrin fancies himself a painter; his apartment is strewn with half-finished canvasses, jars of paint, and well-used brushes. Two empty chambers upstairs (19) are reserved for visitors, travelling priests, or new priests of the temple.

The private shrine (22) is provided for the senior priests and the Right Hand of Tyr to hold special ceremonies. Tapestries here depict Tyr rendering judgement on mortals in the Realms. One depicts Lord Kormallis in the days of his crusade against the orcs and goblins of the mountains outside of Ravens Bluff. The center statue in this shrine depicts Tyr as an armored warrior, without a helm. His eyes are bound with a cloth. To his right is Truth, to his left, Honor. ❑



STAR*DRIVE™ is the first campaign setting for the ALTERNITY® science fiction roleplaying game. Set for release in July, the Star*Drive campaign book includes a dozen star systems, fantastic history, and the details of tomorrow.

Welcome to STAR*DRIVE

by David Eckelberry

The year is 2501. Human ingenuity and alien technology have created means to travel between stars. In our new role of interstellar explorers, we routinely discover astonishing life forms, incredible phenomena, and hints of ancient civilizations.

Starships of all sizes and shapes navigate through space and drivespace (an alternate reality which allows us to cross the stars). Veritable flying cities, Fortress ships are the indomitable peacekeepers of the day. These well-armed giants leap from system to system, ferrying vessels, protecting trade routes, and projecting military force.

Dozens of alien species have been contacted. A few have become familiar brothers and sisters. Some we've adopted, like children in need of guidance. Others are new friends we've just met. No matter what our relationship, the constant we find is the very surprise with which life greets us.

Five major species have joined the quest to explore the stars. We met the nomadic fraal back near Sol as we explored our own solar system. Then we encountered the weren, a race of powerful warriors, making the most of their discovery of gunpowder. A megacorporation found the peaceful, bat-like sesheyans in a stable aboriginal society, and enslaved them. Survey teams met the cybernetic "mechalus," reeling from the turmoil of their own conflicts, desperate for a culture of peace. Finally, the reptilian t'sa were discovered in cryogenic slumber; even with sub-light travel, their curiosity made them desperate to explore the stars.

For centuries now, men and women have lived on worlds far from Earth, slowly changing. Technological integration and body modification has allowed those motivated by professional ambition or personal desire to augment themselves with cybertechnology. Medical science has introduced genetic engineering to both the individual and society. Engineered humans, and even a few accidental mutants, are growing more common. The development of extraordinary mental powers among human beings is even more inexplicable.

The passage of centuries has seen the end of many nations and governments. The governments and cultures of Earth are gone. The new "stellar nations" represent humanity's control of space, spread out in a radius more than a thousand light-years wide. Each nation demonstrates human diversity with a unique origin, culture, and society. And all of the stellar nations are locked in struggle.

Only a few years ago, the stellar nations ended a century-long war, the second fought between the spaceborn powers. The Second Galactic War was a terrible conflict, destroying billions of lives. In the end, the nations agreed to peace not because of victory or settlement, but out of exhaustion. While some make efforts to forge a lasting peace, others still scheme to increase their power and widen their sphere of influence through military and nonmilitary means.

Standing above the stellar nations is the Galactic Concord. Created at the end of the war out of material, territory, and personnel donated by each stellar nation, the Concord's commission is to prevent the specter of warfare from haunting humanity again. The success of the Concord is likely to determine that fate of humanity, and perhaps the galaxy.

An Age of Heroes

In the million stars humanity has explored, there's room for any kind of heroes. Perhaps you're an explorer peeling back the edge of the unknown for the Galactic Concord, a stellar nation diplomat in pursuit of international leverage, a soldier of the Gravity Age defending our new homes in the stars, or your own boss, a free trader, using your driveship to take you wherever the dollar leads.

Of course, you don't have to be merely human. Aliens abound in the Star*Drive universe, with billions of sentients in explored space. Both aliens and humans have developed a generation of mindwalkers, wielding powers of the mind as no one before. Then there are the genetically engineered and the cyber-enhanced—adaptation, after all, is what humans are famous for.

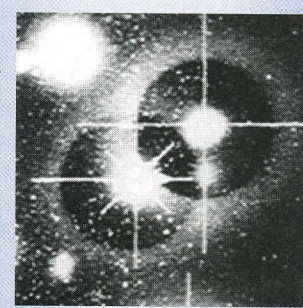
No matter how you begin your career, it will fall on the shoulders of a few scattered heroes to make the difference in the years to come.

The Verge

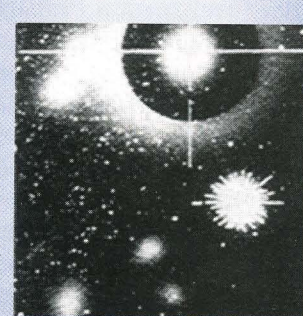
The struggles of the day are exemplified among the distant stars of the Verge, a frontier region stretching toward the closest edge of the Orion Arm of the galaxy. Cut off from the rest of humanity during the war, this region has only recently been reunited with the galactic community.

The Verge is an apron of star systems slanting across a reach of more than one hundred light years toward the Lightning Nebula. Across this space are several hundred star systems. Within this region, explorers have found habitable worlds and resources far more plentiful than they expected. Many have been colonized and explored; a few dozen constitute important colonized worlds. Here, the rivalry of the stellar nations flares into espionage, raids, skirmishes, and all-out combat. Some fight the wars of the past; others strive to keep the freedom they won during the century of isolation. Meanwhile, abandoned by their home nations, the Verge worlds fought, made peace, and fought again. Eventually, most of the Verge worlds tired of fighting wars for remote stellar nations, and a restless peace settled in the region.

The gateway to the Verge is the **Tendril** system, dominated by the mercantile world of Alaundril and its shipyards. Recently reclaimed by its parent stellar nation StarMech, it's anyone's guess what the next few years will bring to a system haunted by diverse business interests.



Next is **Corrivale**, home to the habitable moon Grith. Today, this former corporate holding is under the control of independent sesheyans who have so far escaped the corporation's merciless grasp. With each day, VoidCorp's threat to the independent sesheyans grows. It won't be long before blood is spilled.



Beyond is **Lucullus**, an inhospitable system cluttered with barren rocks and gas giants. The major settlement in this system is Penates, once a penal colony now home to the descendants of its one-time inmates. Unlike most of the valuable star systems of the Verge, Lucullus stood unwanted by the stellar nation that founded it.

Aegis is the heart of the Verge, a warm and familiar yellow sun. The ocean world of Bluefall is one of the closest Earth-analogues yet discovered. Refugees from the Second Galactic War emigrated and established the independent Regency of Bluefall. As the stellar nations return to the Verge, Aegis is assuming the role of diplomatic and economic capital. Most of the stellar nations have established embassies and consulates on one of Bluefall's numerous islands. Today the Regency of Bluefall is one of the most powerful Verge governments.

Not far from Aegis is **Argos**, one of the more interesting star systems. Its unusual binary star formation has attracted explorers, scientists, and colonists. As the Argos system formed, a second star wandered close and was captured. The primary star and its planets are less than a billion years old, and terraforming is underway on two of its terrestrial planets to make them habitable in the next decade. Meanwhile, the smaller secondary star is quite old; its sulfur-rich planet has had time to develop lifeforms of its own.

Oberon is the next major population center, another inhospitable star orbited by barren planets. However, it possesses great mineral wealth and industrial capacity. Abandoned during the Second Galactic War, the residents of Oberon declared their independence. Today, they struggle to remain free from their former patrons, the Rigunmor Star Consortium.

More than 40 light-years further into the Verge lies the **Algemron** system. Blessed with two habitable worlds, Algemron would be paradise, a new home to humanity out here on the frontier. But Algemron's two lush planets have been locked in what seems to be an eternal struggle; for them, the war isn't over. And it won't be as long as the enemy lives.

The last of the Verge systems is distant **Hammer's Star**. Before the onset of the Second Galactic War, the colony of Spes promised continued expansion and exploration onward to the next spiral arm of the galaxy. The Borealis Republic, sponsor of the Hammer's Star settlement, tirelessly poured resources and manpower into Spes, erecting a strong base and a thriving colony. Now the denizens of the Verge wonder at the destruction of the Silver Bell colony. Life in the Verge is tough, and it's about to get a whole lot tougher.

The ALTERNITY design team is giving the Network their own corner of the Verge to play in. And *with*. Members will help define the Argos system for a new LIVING™ campaign, to be launched in 1999. Start planning your vision of of the RPGA Living Galaxy now, and become the architect of the future.

The New Face of the Enemy—Facele

Play by Email Games on the internet

by Stéphane Raymond

As we near the 21st century, our lives are more and more influenced by the growing presence of this new medium we all know as the internet. It is not only natural, but inevitable for this revolution to reach out and touch the world of roleplaying games.

After only a few years, electronic games have taken a life of their own with the introduction of a wide variety of commercial online games and thousands of free events organized for and by gamers. Let's take a look at some of the basics.

Before the Internet

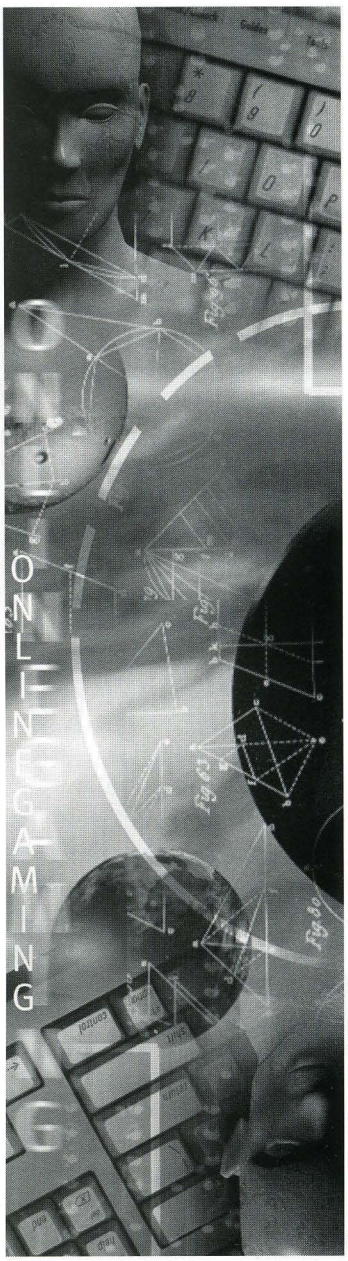
A PBeM is a game played by electronic mail, via the World Wide Web or on any of a number of internet relay chat (IRC) networks. However, the idea is hardly new.

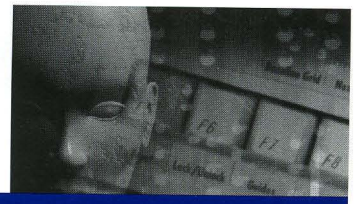
The ancestor of PBeM games is, without any doubt, a still very popular commercial system known as "Play by Mail". Often referred to as "snail mail" games by online gamers, these events function using the postal service. Each gamer completes a questionnaire (called a turn in game lingo) and sends it to the PBM home where it is processed with all the other turns from other players. Players are then charged a set fee for each turn and receive the result of everyone's actions along with a form for the next turn. As you can imagine, this was a test in patience. The arrival of the internet changed all that.

The Advent of the "e"

Suddenly, fans of the PBM concept had a new tool: electronic mail. Putting the full force of this solid internet application into play, Gamemasters began to design adventures where the limits of time and distance were nearly obliterated. Multi-player games took the fast lane towards the next century. Players suffered no more waiting around for the post office. They spent no more money to take turns (since most people then accessed the internet via university accounts).

Now, many pay a small fee for internet access, but almost anyone can get it either at home or at school (high school, college, university). Gamers from all over the world have the opportunity to join the same games. As a matter of fact, PBeM games have become a substitute to the traditional table events for many gamers who have no gaming group or live in remote areas. Two main types of games have emerged from that melting pot: commercial "Moderated" games and the free "Hosted" games. Moderated games still resemble their postal forefathers, charging a fee for each turn submitted in the game. Hosted games, on the other hand, take as many shapes as there are people on the net. Run by gamers for gamers, PBeMs are an evolving forum. The introduction of integrated internet software offers tons of new possibilities to GMs. The original text adventure is now supplemented by sounds, images,





Play by Email Games on the internet

plans, web sites, animation, character biographies, and a multitude of other elements.

The quality of a PBeM can be judged by many different factors: rules, complexity, flexibility, and the support the player can get from the GM (i.e. rules, tools, references, advice). Finding the right mix of these factors can be difficult, but no more or less so than finding a roleplaying game group you play well with. You just need to be persistent if you don't find what you want the first time.

How Does a PBeM Work?

In general, a PBeM goes through various steps to get started. First, there will be a call for players (on newsgroups or using specialized web sites), then character creation following the GM's guidelines, the approval (or rejection) of characters, and, finally, the start of the game.

Most PBeMs naturally, will be played by email. However, many use IRCs instead. IRCs allow faster interaction but impose more limits since there is a requirement for all gamers to be available at the same time and date.

The PBeM isn't that different from what you may have experienced in "live" events. The GM will start things off by sending a general message to all players describing the current situation and the surroundings. The post may also introduce key non-player characters or serve to explain events leading to the adventure. Players in turn, send a reply via email that describes what their character does in the given situation. The GM then provides the reactions of his "world" to the action of the characters. The entire process is repeated until the adventure is complete.

The email messages can work on a turn basis (where all gamers describe the actions of their characters and the GM fills in the gaps) or on a fully interactive method. The interactive approach attracts the attention of the majority of gamers since they don't have to wait for a specific turn in order to play. This system allows for several players to interact directly with one another with minimal intervention from the GM. Use your favorite web browser in order to find more information on the styles mentioned (see pg. 16 for places to search for games).

Roleplaying in a PBeM

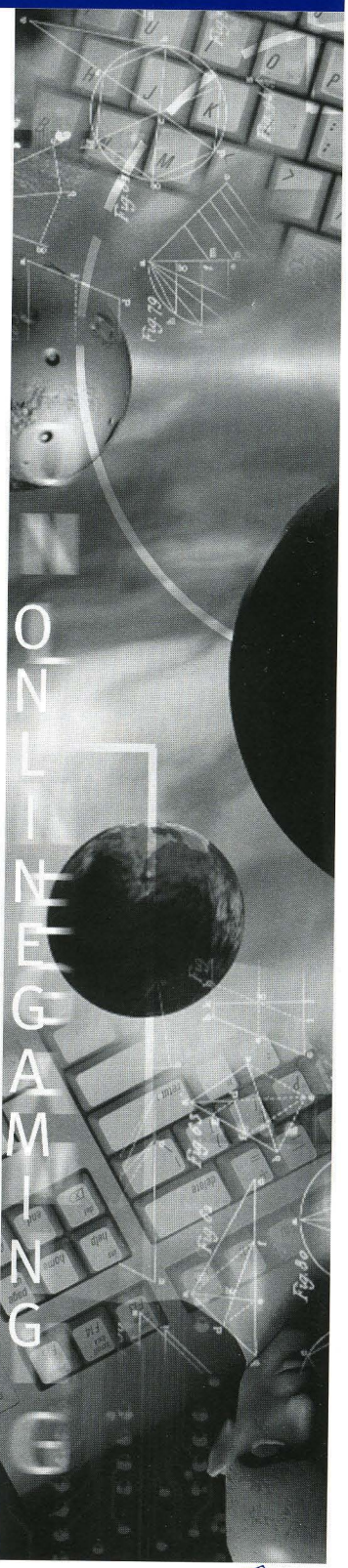
In your normal roleplaying game, where all players know each other well, true roleplaying is, sadly, often overlooked. In an effort to be believable, a player tends to choose a character that matches his/her personality.

For instance, a shy person rarely plays an extroverted character, and if he does, he probably does not play the role well. In a normal face-to-face roleplaying game, a player reacts not just according to the character she chooses, but also by what the other players assembled around the table expect from her.

This reality explains why conventions are so popular. There, gamers gain the ability to play with people who don't know them, and consequently, have no idea of their real personalities. They don't worry about others' disapproval or the long-term interpersonal repercussions of their behavior. The same interesting factor can be found in a PBeM game.

In PBeMs, especially those where players from multiple countries interact, the nature of each character can vary greatly from the player's own personality. PBeM games are the perfect place for anonymity. This gives the players a freedom of choice not found in standard RPGs. In internet play, gamers are judged for what they do in the game and the quality of their messages instead of by what other players think of him or her.

PBeM games will never replace the enjoyment of gaming with real people, and they aren't designed to. But PBeM games do allow for larger gaming community along with the inclusion of anyone of everyone regardless of geography. That's something we can all agree with.



Looking for a good PBeM game?

Not surprisingly, many sources of information are available on the internet. Not all of them are extensive or of high quality but all deserve to be visited at one time or another. Give it a try!

If you are new to the genre, you'll be looking for information on available games, tools, and tricks and tips. Thankfully, the internet offers just as many sites where information is easily available.

People seeking information have two main search tools: the World Wide Web and Newsgroups (also called Usenet). Web access requires a browser (Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer is recommended) while Newsgroups can be accessed with a suitable news reader (like Forte Free Agent).

We recommend:

On the Web:

WebRPG: `http://www.webrpg.com/`
PBeM News: `http://www.pbem.com/`
RPGNet: `http://www.rpg.net/`

In Newsgroups:

`rec.games.frp.archives`
`rec.games.frp.misc`
`rec.games.rpg`
`alt.games.frp`

Another good source of information is the well-known ftp (file transfer protocol) of the Multi-Player Game Network at <`ftp.mpgn.com`>. Let us know what you think!

Games people play:

There isn't enough space here to list the thousands of available PBeM games. However, most beginners want to start with a system known to be reliable.

One thing to look for is how professionalism of presentation. You can be certain that a game offering access to a newsgroup or a lists server is more likely to produce results than one operated by individual mailing lists. Here are a few worth mentioning:

On the Web:

Black Dragon: `http://www.he.net/~bdrag/`
Macray's Keep: `http://www.relation.com/macray/`
MURC: `http://murc.undernet.org/murc/`
Starbase Sigma: `http://www.geocities.com/~phocas/enter.htm`
PBeM News: `http://www.pbem.com/`

In Newsgroups:

`rec.games.frp.announce`
`alt.starfleet.rpg`
`alt.holoworld.rpg`
`alt.pub.dragons-inn`
`alt.games.whitewolf`

Creating your Own Game

There comes a time in every gamers' history when he/she decides it is time to take the leap and become a Gamemaster. Most of the references listed here provide information on PBeM GM requirements. Good luck, and have fun!

Warp into the 24th Century!–The Starbase Sigma PBeM RPG

Although most play by electronic mail games tend to be based on medieval and horror settings, a fair number of them are futuristic, often in established settings such as Star Wars, Star Trek, Traveler, Diplomacy, and hundreds of others. The Starbase Sigma PBeM RPG (a division of the Companions of the Unicorn/Canadian RPG Association) is a prime example.

Based on the ever-popular world of Star Trek by Gene Rodenberry, Starbase Sigma gives gamers the opportunity to join Starfleet and become everything from an engineer to a starship Captain!

Operating from an elaborate series of dedicated list servers, the games in this setting (one starbase and multiple starships) all function independently. All have their own GMs along with an assorted selection of NPCs and futuristic locations.

Players join the game by first visiting the game website. The site offers basic information on the games, the players, the characters and the various games. Designed to look like a Star Trek computer interface, the Sigma site is probably one of the best of its kind. It requires a high performance web browser (Netscape or Internet Explorer 4.0 or higher)!

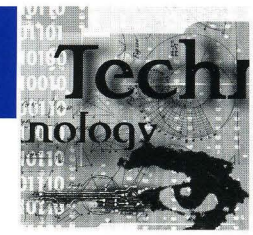
The interested players can sign up for the game right from the internet! That information is forwarded to one of the Registrar Supervisors who are responsible to help the new players to create the best character possible and get introduced to the setting.

One of the principal attractions of the Sigma setting is the fact that, although the games are distinct, what happens in one can have an effect on the others. Mixed adventures are frequent and so are personnel transfers from one game to another. Gamers will play with their core group most of the time but do have the ability to meet other people. With players from over a dozen countries, the Starbase Sigma PBeM Rpg is a challenge not to be missed!

Visit the Starbase Sigma website:
`http://www.geocities.com/~phocas/enter.htm`

The Starbase Sigma PBeM setting is property of the Companions of the Unicorn (Canadian RPG Association). Copyright 1996-1997. Used here with permission.

character generation software



by Shaun A. Horner

So there you are ready for the weekly roleplaying frenzy. You double check to make sure that your favorite character is up to date when you get the dreaded email—your GM has come down with the flu and can't run games.

You start to feel let down when you realize that the GM also mentions that you have been working on a "one shot" and that you will probably be more than happy to run this weeks game in his stead. With a slight thrill you realize that you will be able to run your highly touted "Return to The Keep of the Borderlands".

The only problem is, you need to be able to see each and every character during the generation process (God luv'm. You hang with some great people, but they can fib on their die rolls). How can you watch all the players roll characters quickly and efficiently? Just leave the complex math to that wonderful number cruncher: your personal computer.

What follows is a short list of worthy computer-based character generators for various systems. I have taken the liberty of rating them from one to five PINGS, with five being best.

The AD&D® game Character Generators

gchar155.zip
Address: <http://ww2.cybernex.net/~jefkirsh/Dnd.html>
Program Type: Shareware
Cost: $10 plus postage to Germany (gchar155.zip)
Rating: 2 PINGS
During testing we were unable to get the AD&D definitions to load. However, the generic RPG that was set up seemed to work well. With the ability to add more definitions this particular program might turn into someone's long lost jewel.

The largest drawback to this program (assuming you are using Windows 95) is the fact that it runs in a DOS shell. Unlike most other programs in this article, this one does not use the familiar Windows look and feel. Because of difficulty in using the program, and its "older" look, the program might seem daunting to some who aren't familiar with the DOS look and feel. However, some old timers might want to check the program out.

cgen10.zip
Address: <http://ww2.cybernex.net/~jefkirsh/Dnd.html>
File Name(s): cgen10.zip
Program Type: Shareware
Cost: $5
Rating: 2 PINGS
This program is one of many written using Microsoft Excel. It allows you to create the basics of an AD&D 2nd Ed. character. However, if it isn't a registered version, you won't be allowed to save the character (a bummer but necessary to generate income). However, assuming that the registered version allows you to save characters, choose equipment and spells (missing features in the shareware version), the $5 price tag is certainly worth it. The only benefit of registering the program listed in the readme is the ability to print. However, with a little tweaking, this program could turn into something cool and useful. Obviously this program requires Microsoft Excel, and could possibly run on a MAC.

heroes.zip
Address: <www.geocities.com/Area51/Vault/1642/heroes.zip>
Cost: Free (no cost listed)
Rating: 3.5 PINGS
This software seems more like an AD&D NPC generator than an actual character creator. However, if you want to have a character fully decked out with magical weapons, and equipment without too much hassle then this software may be for you. Since you can also set other parameters you can even use some of the non-standard races if that is your cup of tea (e.g. ogres and drow are listed). The only reason this software isn't rated higher is simply because it is actually an old MS-DOS based program. During testing there were some kinks, and occasionally, because of the set-up, there were often base memory problems (can you say 512K base memory needed?).

All in all the program deserves a look. If you happen to DM more than actually play, then this one might be up your alley.

dark-sun-roller-25.hqx
Address: <http://www.sfn.saskatoon.sk.ca/~aa499/dnd.htm>
Cost: $5 Shareware
Rating: 4 PINGS
Mac oriented DARK SUN® players of the world rejoice, for this is a cool program! This character creator, specifically designed for the DARK SUN setting, is a great tool for making those really weird PCs. The generator is cool, and easy to use. Most of the program uses radio buttons, however, when you can't figure out what to do next, look no further than the command bar at the top of the screen. The program is really self-explanatory.

While I had to wait until I was near a Mac, I certainly

thought that this program was good regardless of the platform. My only regret is that the author can't make a PC version. For the $5 price, if you enjoy the DARK SUN setting, this particular program is certainly worth the money. The documentation doesn't mention what you receive if you register. Perhaps it might be different add-ons for different games...you just have to wait and see.

cg95.zip
Address:
<www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Arcade/12642/cg95.zip>
Cost: Nada
Rating: 1+ PING
While not a completely done program, someone certainly worked very hard on this one. The program seems to use the common Win 95 interfaces we are all familiar with. It has a variety of different setting for the actual rolling of the character. The methods include all those listed in the book and options for first or second edition. At first, the program seemed like a good, inexpensive way to roll up a character.

During testing, however, we had the program hang right around the "choose languages" section. When we tried to use the help feature it was unavailable, and the "about" section only said that the program was under construction. With a little work this could become a decent program. I hope that the author completes what he started.

Earthdawn Character Generators

Address:
<http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Castle/1743/EDCG_Main.html>
File Name: Edcg_13b.zip
Program Type: Freeware (PC)
Cost: Free
Rating: 5 PINGS
This guy went all guns on this one. I had to go back and really look for references for some of the races that he used in this program. To date, I still haven't found them all, but for those of you heavy into Earthdawn, this is the character generator for you.

The program has everything you need to create characters and NPCs. Also here, you can find a supplement file which has many NPCs found in various adventures (including those in fairly recent supplements). This add-on is especially useful if some of the NPCs become major influences on the players.

For those just getting into Earthdawn, this program simplifies the character generation process and helps teach the game. When first starting Earthdawn, the character generation process can be a stumbling block, but this program removes it. Kudos for a great program!

Shadowrun Character Generator

Address:
<http://www.interware.it/users/paolo/sr2/programs/srcg.html>
File Name: srcg.zip (PC)
Program Type: Freeware (PC)
Cost: Nothing
Rating: 4 PINGS

This is a great program. I quickly got flashbacks to one of my old campaigns. I attempted to create my old corp killer Kold Steele™. I was in awe over the amount of equipment that was actually detailed! The program is used right in Windows for easy interface. However, after I completed the character I had trouble printing. I assume that this might be from my ancient printer....however, it might also be a bug. Regardless you can't beat the price for the quality of the software.

GURPS Character Generator

Address: <http://www.teleport.com/~armin/gca/>
File Name: gcasetup.exe (PC)
Program Type: Shareware
Cost: $17 (emailed copy) to $22
Rating: 4 PINGS
One of the few games where a character generator would help keep the time down is this catchy little program for GURPS. This character generator program is more than a little complicated, but if you are already familiar with GURPS, you will find nearly everything you need to run most GURPS genres (this obviously added to its complexity).

You have the ability to import new data for a particular game genre if you don't have the needed skills (for instance, the new Traveller supplement). However, this feature requires that someone other than you like that particular genre and be willing to

create those data files (unless you're good enough to do it yourself). Regardless, this program seems well worth the price for a game system that has become one of the mainstays in the industry. If you like GURPS, check this out.

While this program's complexity is one of its many assets it is also one of its faults. One particular flaw in the generator—the ability to take the same "unique" disadvantage twice—appeared glaringly. My character had two chronic illnesses: one that would

The only problem is, you need to be able to see during the generation process (God luv'm. You each and every character hang with some great people, but they can fib on their die rolls).

kill him in a matter of years, and another that would kill in a matter of weeks. It's been a while since I've played, but this seemed wrong to me. Regardless of minor flaws, the program is certainly worth the registration fee for those who run or play the game often.

Other Systems

Name: charcom.zip
Address: AOL software libraries
Cost: $15 Shareware
Rating: 4.5 PINGS

This software has true potential. The character generator is mainly for some non-mainstream game systems (FUDGE for example). However, we were able to manipulate the software so that you could easily change to most game systems. The test system we used was AD&D. Of course an intricate familiarity with the software would help immensely if you try to completely restructure it, but we saw how the software could be used in a variety of ways.

The software can be programmed to do most of the complex math equations and number crunching for you—a real bonus for those incredibly math-intensive RPGs. One could easily adapt the program to suit your needs for a game like Rolemaster (for which we were unable to find a specifically tailored generator).

Honorable Mention

Online Character Generator!
Address: http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~jmk23765/
File Name: N/A
Program Type: Free Access via internet
Cost: N/A
Rating: 1 PING

I'm not sure why someone would want to generate a character via the internet, but then, a couple of years ago we all wondered if someone could really fill a 100MB hard drive.

The only frustrating part about this program is that it stops working after you choose your weapon proficiencies. I wish the author had waited to post this interesting use of JAVA until it was a little closer to done. The parts of the program I did get to check had flaws which I hope that the author is addressing. Be sure to watch and see if this happens. With a lot of work this application could be of use.

In Conclusion

It's a brave, new world of character generation software programs on the net, and these are just a sampling of everything out there.

As always, YMMV (your mileage may vary). The internet is an inherently unstable place, so any of these could be down at any time. None of these crashed my system, but a virus protector is always a safe bet when downloading from unknown sources. Okay, ready? Go.

ROBOTS FOR DUMMIES

by JD Wiker

New 2178 Edition!

art by Stan!

This introduction to the safe use of robots is meant for the novice operator. You probably just bought your first robot, to clean your house or maintain your factory or crush your enemies.

But unfortunately, not every robot is "operator friendly." And if yours happens to carry enough ordinance to gut a good-sized starship, you want to be absolutely sure it responds to your commands, the way you want it to.

Booting Up

The crate is unpacked, all the parts and pieces assembled, and you have the startup passcode entered in. What next? Well, all robots go through a booting up procedure, similar to a computer.

The first thing that will happen is that your robot will ask for input: it wants to know who its new owner is, and if it has multiple functions, what its current job is. If there are multiple operators, it will also want to know who they are—very important with those combat robots!

TIP!
Household models tend to boot up slower than the "action" models, so hopefully your life doesn't depend on a cup of coffee!

In most cases, the robot will have just one function: driving from point A to point B, keeping the floor clean, fragging hostiles that get too close to the guard tower. Tell it exactly how you want it to accomplish its task, then walk away. But if your new robot can multitask, you will have to tell it which of its programs to follow.

Robot Programs

Any technical wiz can tell you that a robot is just like any other thinking machine: it follows a specific set of programs. Most of the time, these are simple programs: load crates, check IDs, fire machine guns. But some can be quite complex, with a myriad of contingencies and complicated subroutines. Often they approach a human-like ability to make decisions.

The simple ones are the easiest to comprehend for the operator, but they have their drawbacks. For example, if you need your robot to put out a house fire and all it knows how to do is extinguish small grease fires, you might as well start shopping for a new home.

On the other hand, the complex ones, while hopelessly loaded to the vents with subroutines that tell the robot exactly which fork to use at diplomatic functions, are very, very good at problem solving. While your toaster is happily burning the toast, the curtains, and the kitchen, your robot butler is waking you up, informing the fire department, and taking aim with its extinguisher—all while negotiating via comm-link with your insurance agent to get you the best settlement. And it doesn't even ask for a pay raise.

The Robot in Repose

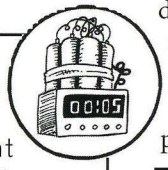
Oh, no! Your robot has shut down all by itself. What's wrong? Simple: robots, like people, need periodic rest.

TECHNICAL STUFF!
Though robots never experience fatigue, they do need to clear out their command buffers, run system diagnostics, and perform simple programming maintenance, such as testing for corrupted files.

Usually, your robot will inform you that it is taking itself "off-line" for a while. Fortunately, the simplest robots generally have very short diagnostic times, so you can always have your soda and snacks right away, without having to wait for the robot to reboot.

In some extreme cases, a robot will detect a flaw in its programming while actually executing the program, and suddenly shut down for no apparent rea-

son. Don't panic. Your robot is just playing it safe, not following any programs for which it no longer remembers the outcome. This is especially important for robots armed with weapons, since they may have forgotten the difference between "operator" and "opponent."



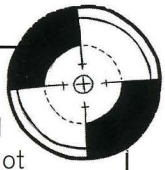
WARNING!
Never, ever try to repair this kind of catastrophic malfunction yourself! It might endanger your life, and will certainly void the warranty!

Lucky for you that your robot comes equipped with a handy operating system based on the "rules for robots" created by visionary Isaac Asimov. Robot designers refer to this system as Asimov OS, or AsimOS.

Asimov's Rules

The "laws" of robotics have changed a great deal since Asimov invented them, primarily because roboticists had to translate them into machine code—which isn't quite so forgiving about the language. Your robot understands, at its most basic level, that it shouldn't do anything to deliberately harm you, or deliberately do nothing while you are coming to harm. But in robot-talk, those simple statements come out to a not-so-elegant series of about 7500 lines of robot code. And that's just to keep your mining robot from excavating you! Imagine how big the program is for your basic police or lawyer robot!

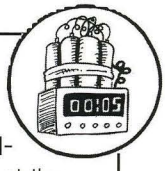
Fortunately, through years of trial and error, robot programmers have learned what is dangerous—and what is just plain irritating. You know that game that children love to play, where they respond to everything you say with "Why?" Pretty annoying, right? Imagine how frustrating it is to have a starship pilot robot that needs repeated clarification on console layouts, or a toaster that constantly asks: "Would you like some toast?"



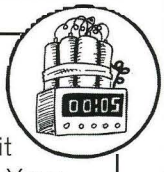
TIP!
A robot who behaves this way is malfunctioning, and should be repaired—and not with a sledge hammer! In fact, your robot may just have a sense of humor.

Robot Personalities

One of the first things most people notice about robots is that they have no sense of self. We say, "I will help you," or "This is my room." A robot says, "This unit will assist," or "This unit is stored in this area." Some robot owners find this disorienting, since humans rarely speak in second-person! In this modern age, robots can come factory-equipped with a human-like personality, complete with quirks and habits.



WARNING!
Remember, with identity comes personality, and with personality comes personality conflicts. A factory robot strike is a high price to pay for robots that speak in first person! Fortunately, a situation like this can be negotiated easily—by unplugging their chips.

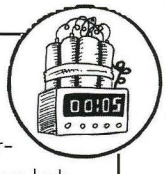


WARNING!
If after installing a personality chip you notice your robot behaving erratically, it may not be just a quirk! Your robot may have contracted a virus.

Your Ailing Robot

Since robots are essentially movable computers, it is quite possible for your robot to contract an electronic virus. How does this happen?

TECHNICAL STUFF!
Primarily, robots contract viruses through electronic communication—either with other robots, or software outlets that promise inexpensive "upgrades. In most cases, these crash your robot's programs and render it inert. In a few cases, your robot forgets something basic—like how to walk—or suddenly only speaks Swedish.

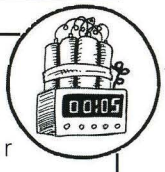


WARNING!
In a very few extreme cases, a virus can erase the AsimOS, and your courteous, efficient robot valet becomes a courteous, efficient killing machine. In the unlikely event that this occurs, find a safe place to wait until its batteries run down.

Deactivating Your Robot

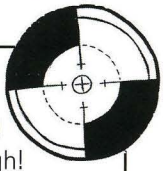
There comes that sad day in the life of every robot owner when he must say good-bye to his trusted electronic friend and shut him down. Unlike vehicles, or refrigerators, robots can become very real "members of the family," and deactivating them an almost traumatic life-event.

TECHNICAL STUFF!
Each and every robot has two passcodes: the startup code, and the emergency shut-down code. In most cases, these are given to the robot verbally. But some older models require that you press a button or switch. It's a good idea to know which one your robot has before you need it.



WARNING!
In such cases, be warned that you shut down a malfunctioning robot at your own risk.

You will most likely use startup code on a weekly basis. Hopefully, you will need to use the shut-down code only once in a robot's lifetime.



TIP!
This being the case, keep the code in a safe place! We can't stress this enough! There is nothing more disturbing than a horribly-malfunctioning robot that insists on taking care of your every need—despite its lack of operating manipulators, sensors and legs.

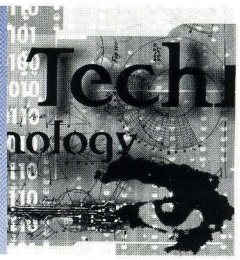
Afterword

We are certain that you will enjoy your new robot every bit as much as you enjoy a good computer or reliable vehicle. If there is anything you need to remember, it is these three simple rules:

1. Leave robot maintenance to a qualified professional.
2. Do not attempt to force your robot to exceed its design specifications.
3. Always, always pay the extra cost for accidental death and dismemberment insurance.

Have fun!

>>>>>(Well, chummers, this is it. After four years of overseeing, editing, and writing for the Virtual Seattle (VS) Tournament system, Margaret (Mj) and I have decided to take a rest. This is the latest compilation of information and rules about VS 2057. From now on, this SR II campaign is in the capable hands of Wes Nicholson, who has supported and been involved with VS since shortly after its inception. Mj and I can help out whenever we want, but for the foreseeable future, we're going to look after the kids and maybe play a little ourselves. So, until you meet a Troll named Donner or an Orc named Garfield, slot 'n' run and we'll see you in the shadows.)<<<<< —Ron Heintz (15:48:30/12-2-97)



VIRTUAL SEATTLE

by Wes Nicholson

OK folks, as you can see, the Heintzes have handed the reins to me. As Ron said, I've been involved in Virtual S eattle almost since the beginning and there are lots of reasons why we do things in VS. So I don't plan on making huge changes without discussing it with Ron and Mj first. They didn't want a power gamer campaign, neither do I. Nor do you if the feedback I get is any indication. However, FASA does release new sourcebooks and these need to be integrated into the campaign in due course.

I won't allow new books into VS for at least six months after release—and not necessarily even then. We need time to evaluate a book's effect on game balance, and for writers to incorporate new gear into the opposition's inventory. Given time constraints for all RPGA adventure submissions, you can see that six months is the minimum we must wait to introduce new source books.

By now, most of you are aware that initiation is available. Since many have commented that VS favors magicians already, it's time to do something for the mundanes. Starting now, *Fields of Fire* is an allowable sourcebook for gear. Just the stuff described in FoF is allowable, not everything in the tables at the back. Custom weapons are also permitted. Of course, combat accidents (FoF pg. 78) are also now in play.

Most VS background material is available on the internet. Try the Network website first, or my page, or just email me and I'll forward you a copy.

What's on the web sites will give you an idea of changes, but nothing is official until it appears in POLYHEDRON. This won't change until every RPGA member has access to the internet.

Sourcebook list

The sidebar on the opposite page shows a comprehensive list of source material for VS. Sourcebooks and add-ons beyond the basic rules, Grimoire, and items mentioned specifically as "in play," are NOT available to PCs except by scenario fiat. Authors may use practically anything, as we'll edit out any game balance problems. All references are to second edition books, where such exist.

Betaware

A tournament is coming which allows PC access to Beta-grade cyberware. At the moment, beta-cyberware is only available piecemeal, if an author includes it in a scenario. We may also offer an item or two at charity auctions.

After the "special" regarding beta-cyberware, PCs can to buy it at the standard cost of seven times normal hardware cost—however, the millions of nuyen usually necessary for surgery will be dealt with, so you might even be able to afford beta Wired Reflexes-3, if you save every penny and "trade up" (see update #5). Gamma-cyberware will never be introduced except as in-scenario special items or as charity items (the latter would NOT be big-ticket items: maybe eyes, Smartlink II, etc.). The occasional scenario will allows PCs to exceed the 100,000 ¥ each max, per VS rules, but these will always be identified. Gamemasters may NEVER do this on their own, so please don't pressure them.

Initiation

Initiation is available to PCs, as of GEN CON® Game Fair 1997. PCs will be allowed to increase their Grades slowly, probably only by in-scenario fiat (This is still under review).

Rules updates

1. Disallowed PC types: as of this writing, the following PC types are disallowed: Druids, Tir Na Nog'th path mages/shamans, practitioners of Voudoun, Adept or quasi-magical types specific to regional sourcebooks (e.g. the germanic types with "second sight"), toxic Shamans, insect Shamans or Shamans with the totems/eidolons of the Awakenings books, cyberzombies, and cybermancy (although authors may use these for opponents).

On the plus side, we won't adopt "focus addiction," as we hope never to have PCs lugging around that many foci. Also, susceptibility to astral nuking should make PCs turn them off when not needed.

2. Pre-game Conjuring for Hermetics: yes! You may pre-conjure Elementals before a scenario begins unless the scenario specifically forbids it. Simply deduct 1000 ¥ per Force level that you attempt and make the rolls in front of the game master. You may attempt up to 40 hours of conjuration, pre-scenario. Failed rolls have the usual result. The down side—you are presumed to use up the remaining services, if any, of your conjured Elementals between scenarios—no holding them over from tournament to tournament.

3. Other "downtime" activities: virtually nil, except those covered in the player pack (learning a new spell, getting your one item through Claudia). We simply can't administer this at present.

4. Cost of living: time passes at roughly a one-for-one realtime ratio in VS, except that a minimum of one month is presumed to have passed between scenarios. We don't foresee many "time warp" problems, as we don't intend to release more than 6 or so new VS scenarios per year, to maintain campaign quality control (we haven't hit even that level of submissions as yet). The month is the same as now; the year is now plus 60. At the start of each scenario, PCs must expend 1 month's worth of Lifestyle nuyen or be at Street level. PCs are presumed to have been at this level since the last scenario, although no extra nuyen expense is necessary; the PC had piecework to cover expenses.

5. Upgrading cyberware: presuming an

item is undamaged, you may sell back cyberware when upgrading for 25% of its hardware value (taking into account alpha or beta mark-up, if any). Remember, if you upgrade from 3 points of normalware to the equivalent in alpha grade, the alpha only takes 2.4 Essence points off, but you get no Essence back. You have a 0.6 point "hole" you can refill at no further Essence cost until you exceed the "hole." Alpha and other grades are ONLY available from scenarios.

6. Learning new spells: learning new spells costs 1000 ¥ per force level (unless you have a skill such as Magic Theory or a concentration/specialization) and the appropriate karma. So, learning Stun at force 5 costs 5000 ¥ (or skills test as per pp. 132-133 of SR II) and 5 Good Karma (not from your Karma Pool). You don't need to make a learning roll if you spend money—you're successful. You CAN use leftover elemental services at the end of a scenario to help learn the new spell.

7. Buying stuff in or between scenarios: assuming you have the cash, you can purchase anything from the allowed books (see the sidebar) assuming it has a Street Index of 1.25 or less. Between scenarios, you can buy one item that has a Street Index of 3 or less. Under no circumstances can you obtain an item with a Street Index higher than 3 except as scenario loot. Write down exactly what gear, cyber-, or bioware does. The player and GM must know what stuff does. If you can, bring reference books.

8. Claudia's Van: when transportation is a problem, the group can use Claudia's modified VW Superkombi III van. It can't be modified; she likes it the way it is. The stats are:

Handling	4/8
Speed	35/105
Body	4
Armour	3
Signature	2
AutoPilot	3
Seating:	4 + 10 Fold Bench
Access:	2 Standard, 1 Side, 1 Rear

Notes: Advanced Passenger Protection System, Anti-theft (9), Secondary Controls, Data Jack Interface(+2 Reaction if driver is jacked in), Remote Control Interface, Rigger Control Interface, Driver-side Integrated Controls (+1 Reaction), Runflat tires + spare (5!/3 armor).

9. Item certificates: it has been suggested that players receive a certificate to prove that their characters have obtained gear legitimately. This has not been implemented. If it ever is, some "grandfathering" system might be used. You may wish to keep records of your scenarios beyond the required "Karma, nuyen, scenario name" if this concerns you.

10. Authors: we allow literary license to bend the rules or invent new stuff for a scenario. Beware of doing this too much and please, keep balance and fairness in mind. "Your-PC-can't-do-that-but-my-NPC-can" can be frustrating for players.

Address for Submissions

Submissions for VS tournaments should be sent on disk to HQ. They'll pass it along to me. Include your name and address in a letter with the disk so I can get back to you.

You can also email tournaments to: <wes@dynamite.com.au>. At the same time, email a copy to HQ at <rpgahq@wizards.com> so we all know what's going on. Put "VS submission" in the subject line, because I don't download emailed files unless I know what they are. Please scan your file(s) for viruses; you can never be too sure.

HQ will just hold onto the tournament while I go over it to check for game balance and level of difficulty. Then it goes to FASA (I'll handle this to save time) to see that it doesn't violate Shadowrun rules or conventions, or make a significant change to the SR future history. After that, it goes back to you so you can see what we've changed (if anything) and then the finished version goes to HQ for final checks and inclusion on the list of available scenarios.

Sourcebook	Additional Comments
7103 Sprawl Sites	no gear, no problem
7104 Street Samurai Catalog	items available for: i) beginning PCs upon creation ii)existing PCs if Street Index is < or = 1.75 iii)existing PCs, if Street Index is < or = 3, as the one item from Claudia between scenarios.
7105 Paranormal Animals of North America	PCs cannot have paranormal pets
7107 Virtual Realities 1.0	no effect due to VS decker rules
7108 Rigger Black Book	as per Street Samurai catalog
7109 ShadowBeat	as per Street Samurai catalog
7110 ShadowTech	as per Street Samurai catalog
7112 Paranormal Animals of Europe	PCs cannot have paranormal pets
7113 Corporate Shadowfiles	no gear, no problem
7114 Fields of Fire	as per Street Samurai catalog
7115 Lone Star	available through scenarios only
7116 Prime Runners	no gear, no problem
7117 Bug City	no gear, no problem
7118 Corporate Security	available through scenarios only
7119 Cybertechnology	cybernetics available to existing PCs only. Move by Wire NOT allowed
7120 Awakenings	author tool only for the moment
7201 Seattle	
7202 Native American Nations I	
7203 London	
7204 Germany	
7207 Native American Nations II	
7208 Neo Anarchists Guide	
7210 Tir Tairngire	
7211 Tir Na Nog	shamanic totems/paths not allowed
7212 Denver (Box Set)	
7213 Aztlan	
7900 SRII General Rules	
7902 Gamemaster Screen/Contact	
7903 Grimoire 2nd Ed.	druids and toxic totems not allowed for PCs
7904 Virtual Realities 2.0	

All history and places in the 7200 and 7900 series are part of the VS world. Gear listed is available as per rules in Street Samurai guide, above.

Shadowrun terms and concepts are © 1998 FASA Corp., used with their kind permission. Thanks. The Virtual Seattle system, logo, and special rules are the creations of Ron and Margaret Heintz.

TECH WINNERS FROM THE 1997 DECATHLON

Winner: sidekick/henchman category
Lisa Tomihiro

Name: Kishiko Masamoto
Street name: Angel of Mercy
Race: Human
Sex: Female
Age: 19

Description: a small Japanese girl with black hair, and indigo blue eyes

Personality Quirks:
l)looks after, protects authority figures
2) likes to kill (preferably under orders)
3) intense about everything
4) perfectionist

Attributes

Body	6 (9)
Quickness	6 (10)
Strength	6 (10)
Charisma	4
Intelligence	6
Willpower	6
Essence	0.05
Body Index	5.9
Reaction	6 (14)
Karma Pool	9
Initiative	ld6+6 (3d6+14)

Skills

Unarmed Combat	6
Firearms	6
Stealth	6
Athletics	4
Electronics	1
—Maglocks	5
Corp Etiquette	3
Native Lang: Japanese	
Language: English	3

Dice Pools

Combat Pool	11
Active Skills	1

Armor/Gear

Type	Rating
Natural	+3 Imp/+2 Bal
Secure Jacket	+3 Imp/+S Bal
Total effect	+6 Imp/+7 Bal

Cyberware

Type	Rating	Effect
Wired Reflexes	2	+2d6 Init, +4 Reaction
Titanium Bone Lacing		+2 Body, +1 Imp, +1 Bal, Unarmed (STR+3)M
Smartlink		
Cyber Replacement eyes		Low, Thermo, Flare Comp

Bioware

Type	Rating	Effect
Orthoskin		+2 Impact, +1 Ballistic (Drawback: Tactile based perception tests +3 Target Number)
Enhanced Articulation		+1 Reaction, +1 Active skills
Muscle Augmentation	3	+3 Strength, +3 Quickness
Superthroid Gland		+1 Body, +1 Quickness +1 Strength +1 Reaction

Background:

Kishiko Masamoto is the henchman brawn to Shigeto Masamoto's brain. She was put into a program created by Mitsuhama while still a baby to make her an elite bodyguard and assassin. Shigeto raised and trained her. He was her father figure, and her immediate superior.

When she was small, he would check on her progress daily. Early in the program (near her fourth birthday) he gave her a teddy bear for comfort and positive reinforcement. When the cyberware was put in and she had trouble adjusting, Shigeto always brought her presents and cheered her up.

He made sure that he was the only kind and thoughtful person around. If he caught any other member of the staff being kind to the girl he had that person removed. Every other person around her was efficient and demanded that she be perfect in every way. "Assassins don't cry, Kishiko!" "Do it again faster, you are too slow!" She was never physically beaten (except for a few times when small to teach her not to leave the training rooms without permission), but neither did she receive the love and kindness children need when growing up. Shigeto made very sure that he was the only person Kishiko could turn to for love, affection,

or comfort.

Kishiko idolizes Shigeto. He can do no wrong. She will not hear a bad word spoken against him and would defend his person and reputation to the death.

Because of all of her cyber- and bioware, Kishiko is more than a little crazy. In fact, she is psychopathic. However, because of her deep bond to Shigeto he can control her killing tendencies and mold her insanity as he desires.

After Kishiko finished her training, she became Shigeto's personal bodyguard. She also played his shadow most of the time, even going to formal functions with him. Occasionally, he sent her on special missions, in which she got to destroy the enemies of Mitsuhama (and Shigeto). This kept her happy. All she really requires to be happy is somebody to look after/take orders from and a little killing every now and then.

Kishiko is the perfect henchman because she obeys orders immediately, would never think to contradict Shigeto, and is absolutely loyal. Shigeto realizes how lucky he is to have someone like Kishiko, which is why he took so much time with her when she was a child. He wanted to mold her into the perfect, obedient, loyal "daughter." Shigeto always treats her with respect.

Shigeto himself is a power hungry corporate type. He's brilliant, crafty, conniving, black-hearted, and in only for himself. He pretends to be a loyal company man, realizing that he can do more with the support of Mitsuhama (and the Yakuza) that he could on his own. If this support left him, he would leave.

He's very good at convincing people that he cares about the company and that he has the company's (and others') best interests at heart.

The only person he has any respect for is Kishiko, and reason he cares for her is that he "created" her. He admires his handiwork, and is impressed (mostly with himself) at her efficiency. She is the only person he would think twice about double crossing, although if it really came down to it, he'd expect her to die protecting him.

Winner: tech toy category
Paul Gosselin

Personal Universal Translator

Being able to communicate effectively with new and prospective clients is a primary concern among traders, politicians, and spies. The extremely compact Personal Universal Translator (PUT) from Cybot Galactica fills this need in a no-frills manner. This device allows a single individual to communicate verbally in up to two thousand known languages. Language chips are available for each sector of the Empire, each star system, and each planet. Simply pop in a new language chip to understand what everyone around you is saying behind your back!

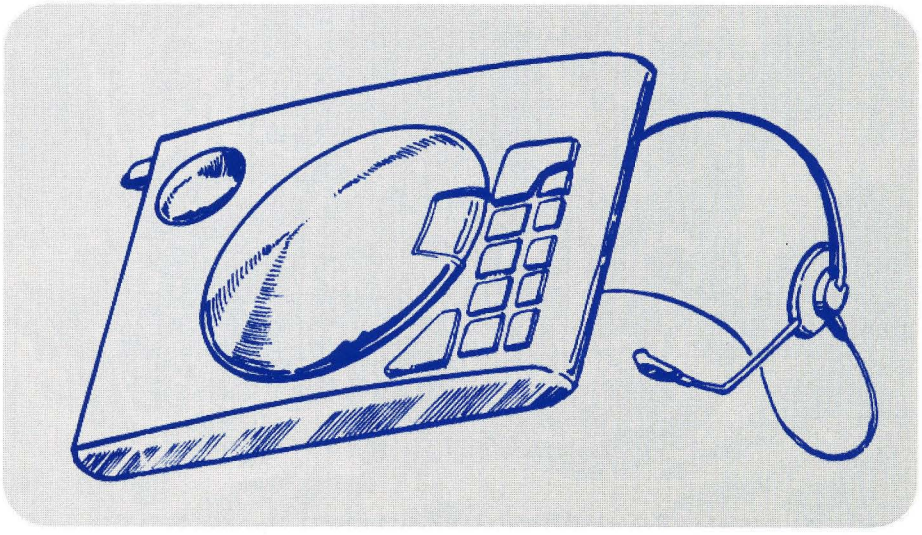
The PUT does not have any artificial intelligence of its own and cannot translate body language, rituals, or any other non-verbal types of communication. Using broadband communications, it can interface with a protocol droid to enable more precise translations. The droid does not have to be physically present, but must be within broadband receiver range. Two chip receptacles in the master unit can be used to hold a second language or memory chip. Up to 1,000 languages can be stored on each chip. These chips cannot be modified by the user, but a new chip could be created with the proper facilities. There is a companion unit which must be installed in the droid which allows it to broadcast any translations or helpful hints back to the PUT user.

The optional memory chip will allow for recordings of up to eight standard hours. Any sounds that are picked up by the PUT are recorded in this specialized chip. The range of recorded sounds is well into the ultrasonic and subsonic spectrums to allow for accurate recordings from several non-humanoid species. These chips cannot be overwritten or modified, and each chip is usable only once.

Other features of the PUT include primary and secondary earpiece ports which allow discreet listening for up to two individuals or for having private conversations. While an ear piece is inserted into either port, the speaker on the main unit can be turned off for privacy. The master unit is about the size of a paperback novel.

The Empire has modified the broadband transmitter/receiver setup that allows a probe droid or assassin droid to use the PUT. This combination became very effective for deep cover operatives that require an assassin droid to terminate its target from a distance at a spoken code phrase.

The Empire also utilizes the PUT as a diplomatic aid when dealing in remote areas. Each ambassador post is issued several of these units as soon as diplomatic relations get underway. Many traders use the PUT as an alternative to a relatively expensive protocol droid. It has also been rumored that imperial spies use the PUT to listen to (and record) incriminating conversations, though that would be illegal.



THE TOENAIL OF CHAOS

DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE® CONTEST WINNERS FROM WAY BACK IN ISSUE 123

Despite the chaos during TSR's Time of Troubles (or perhaps by its own design), we managed to save these contest winners, as judged by the DL:5A creative team. More than a year later, we present the winner, Adam Bennington, and runner-up, Henry R. Gannon.

by Adam Bennington

The world of Krynn changed greatly after the Battle of the Rift. But some things always stay the same. Such are the kender. The great upheavals that rocked Krynn spurred many kender, charged with wanderlust, to new and wonderful adventures.

One such kender was Wyn Lockstumbler. Wyn had traveled all over Ansalon, twice according to his tales. He came home to live in his village of Hommol in Kenderhome but after trying his hand at farming, Wyn became bored, a terrible fate for a kender (and anyone else near one). Wyn would often visit the local tavern telling tales of his adventures in hopes of a free ale. "Oh yes, I was in Palanthas once. Beautiful city... They have this wonderful tower. At any rate, I had a misunderstanding with a giant... Well, he was really just a Knight of Solamnia, but he could have been a giant. Anyway, he dropped his purse so I picked it up and I was going to eventually return it to him and then..."

Word reached Kenderhome about the strange happenings concerning Chaos and the gods and Wyn Lockstumbler decided to set out exploring again. So many new adventures awaited! Eventually, Wyn joined a group of explorers charting the changes to Solamnia after the Battle of the Rift. One day, when the group was passing through a dark forest in the mountains of Solamnia, they discovered a rare and wondrous object, or at least Wyn thought so. The group came to a clearing in the pines and saw a small crater in the mountainside near them. They decided to investigate but as they moved closer, Wyn observed his friends becoming more and more nervous. Eventually, Wyn noticed that his companions had wandered off. "Oh well," he said to himself, "I'll catch up with them later." (The members of the exploration party were found a week later, still wandering aimlessly unable to even remember their names.)

Very carefully, Wyn approached the charred crater and peered over its edge. In the center of the crater, half covered with soot and ash, was a large crescent shaped stone made of a shiny, cream colored substance. As Wyn stood there and looked at it for a while, his kender mind thought it looked like a toenail of a giant. He therefore reasoned that this must be the toenail of the overgod Chaos! (It could be from another god, but Wyn thought Chaos was the most likely.) Maybe in the Battle of the Rift, someone had cut off Chaos's toenail, and it had somehow ended up here. Many asked him how this "toenail" could travel so far. "I don't know," he responded. "That's not important... It's the toenail of a god. It can do what it wants."

Wyn couldn't resist showing off his new prize and decided to return to his village of Hommol. When he got home, he went to the local tavern and told new stories. "You see, my friends and I were traveling through this forest and... Oh, I wonder whatever happened to them..."

The "toenail" became the treasure of the town. But strange things began to happen in the village of Hommol. Objects at one spot in a room would mysteriously move the another spot. People would go to sleep in their beds and wake up in the street. A painting would be turned upside down. Everything seemed harmless so the kender came to see it as a game. But the incidents went on and became more serious and more deadly. Certain people would have good luck while others would be brought to their knees with misfortune. One poor kender was struck by lightning in the middle of a blizzard. Another had her new barn collapse on top of her for no reason.

Wyn was finally asked to get rid of his "toenail" and with much reluctance and many tears, he did. He went far away from the Hommol and buried it, but upon his return home, he found the toe-

HAPPY KENDER—BEFORE THE CHAOS TOENAIL!

nail in its old resting place on his mantle. The kenders of Hommol tried everything: breaking it, burning it, dropping it in a nearby lake, hanging it from a tree, and painting it blue (no one really knows why this was tried). They even gave it away to travelers. It always came back!

Wyn himself changed. He grew possessive of the "toenail." He shined it and even began speaking with it. He ceased going out much and when he did, the "toenail" always went with him. When people came to visit, Wyn seemed fine until they moved for his treasure. Then his eyes grew frenzied and he clutched his prize whispering, "Must protect toenail...."

No one knows what Wyn Lockstumbler brought home. Many of the humans that have come near the "Toenail of Chaos" have lost their memory. One mage of the Red Robes who studied it has never been seen since. But there are a one or two who claim they have unlocked great magic after encountering the "toenail." And all sorts of strange happening have gone on around Wyn's house—strange lights, weird sounds, peculiar beasts, voices, etc.

The kender of Hommol want nothing greater than to be rid of the object. Is it the Toenail of Chaos? Who knows... But in the heart of Kenderhome, there is a village of kender that would give anything to be free of its greatest treasure.

THE CHAOS CLOUD

by Henry R. Gannon

The Chaos Cloud is an amorphous bank of vapor. Also called the Firemist due to its reddish-orange sheen, the exact size of the Cloud varies and has been described as a large upright column, an airborne cloudmass, and a grounded bank of fog. The Cloud's normal pace seems to be equal to that of a stout dwarf marching, though it has been seen moving as fast as a galloping horse without being deterred by wind speed or direction, water, or other obstacles. Though it has appeared during daylight hours, nighttime sightings are more common.

The first documented report of the Cloud was in 2 s.c. (Second Cataclysm), and as few as one to as many as seventeen different sightings have been recorded in each year since. The Cloud was even seen thrice in a single night at widely distant locations on Ansalon, before vanishing for close to a year. The Cloud's only constant is that it has never been sighted within a city or other enclosed area of people.

The Chaos Cloud has gathered a dread reputation about it, but not from any overt acts of malice. The Cloud's presence heralds change, usually—but not always—for the worse. The withering of crops, an outbreak of disease ravaging livestock, a sudden storm, freak accidents and the like have all beset areas in the Cloud's wake. All the myriad events and happenings cataloged thus far are those that can and have happened naturally or through ill luck, though few believe it coincidence that they strike within days of the Cloud's passing. Occasionally, the Cloud is a harbinger of good; a terminal fever suddenly breaks, rains come unexpectedly to ease a drought and similar incidents are credited to it, but these are uncommon. No other evidence of the Cloud's passing has been noted, and no other properties have been witnessed or ascribed to the Firemist.

It is said that the Chaos Cloud is the last breath that the Chaos God exhaled through the rift before it closed. Other rumors state that it is an as yet unspecified creature of Chaos, like daemon warriors and shadow wights, but it has not shown sentience or anything else that would categorize it as truly alive. The exact origins of the Chaos Cloud and its purpose are, as yet, very much unknown. ❑

Boccob
Lord of All Mages

by Eric L. Boyd

Powers That Be

Boccob

The Uncaring, Lord of All Magics, Archimage of the Gods

Greater Power of the Outlands, N

Portfolio:
Magic, arcane knowledge, foreknowledge, foresight

Aliases:
Al-Zarad (Baklunki)

Domain Name:
Outlands/The Library of Lore

Superior:
None

Allies:
Zagyg

Foes:
Tharizdun

Symbol:
Eye in a pentagram or eye in a star

Wor. Align.:
Any

Habitual* POLYHEDRON® *Magazine readers may see similarities between this column and Forgotten Deities. Since most of the remaining human powers of the* FORGOTTEN REALMS® *campaign appeared in Powers & Pantheons, I wanted to expose deities of other worlds and races. Coming issues will reveal powers of the classic* WORLD OF GREYHAWK® *setting, due for relaunch in June.

Boccob (BO-kob) the Uncaring seems not to care whether any worship or serve him, and sages have postulated that his power is linked directly to the strength of magic on Oerth. Nevertheless, the Archimage has a small number of worshippers spread throughout the Flanaess, with a handful of adherents in most major cities and some towns and villages. Boccob is primarily revered by sages, but he is also entreated for omens by seers and diviners and those who seek new magics often ask his aid. The Archimage of the Gods is venerated by most of the human races of the Flanaess, outside of enclaves of pure Suel stock where the faith of Wee Jas is typically preeminent. Some believe he was the first human wizard of Oerik countless millennia ago.

Boccob neither seeks nor avoids confrontation. He desires balance above alignment and knowledge above all. He is concerned with magical research and creation, manipulation of the "flux," nexus points, and other manifestations of magic.

The Lord of All Magics is both gifted and cursed by his ability to foresee the future, for in it he sees the eventual disappearance of magic from Oerth, and the death of everything he holds dear. His appellation as the Uncaring is somewhat of a misnomer, as Boccob is actively battling to save Oerth from its creeping doom. The Archimage cares intensely about the weakening of the fabric of magic, and nearly all of his power is focused on delaying and reversing magic's apparently inexorable decline.

Consumed by his self-appointed task of preserving magic, Boccob has little time for day-to-day events in the Flanaess. The Lord of All Magics almost never leaves his realm, preferring to send his demipower servant, Zagyg the Mad. For his part, the Mad Archmage serves Boccob most carefully, but out of his own will and a desire to retain enlightened neutrality and uncertain humor everywhere. Boccob suspects, but cannot prove, that Tharizdun is behind magic's slow waning, and thus actively contributes to the Dark God's long-standing imprisonment. Boccob's relationship with Wee Jas is characterized by a healthy rivalry: where the Suel goddess of magic is pri-

marily concerned with magic as a force in and of itself and mysticism, Boccob cares more for the manipulation of magic and magical artifice. Boccob's relationships with other gods such as Istus, Lendor, Cyndor, Delleb, and Zuoken are of mutual respect, but little warmth or interaction. For the most part, Boccob is a reclusive, driven scholar with little tolerance for extremism in any form and little interest in anything save magic.

Boccob's Avatar (Wizard 40, Priest 35) Boccob appears as an old man with bright, intense eyes, clad in garments of purple with shimmering gold runes stitched in the cloth. He slightly favors spells from the sphere and school of divination, although he typically casts spells from all spheres and schools.

Special Att/Def: Boccob is always armed with his *Staff of the Archimage*, which combines the powers of a *staff of the magi*, a *wand of conjuration*, and a *quarterstaff +5*, but never expends charges. It can absorb up to 24 spell levels per round. Boccob can create three magical effects per round, whether they are spells, item effects, etc. He is unaffected by magic or psionics of any sort unless he chooses to be. He can only be hit by weapons of +5 or better damage, and he regenerates 1d4 points of damage per round. All undead flee him in fear unless he commands otherwise. All of his spells have up to triple the normal effect in all respects and an additional –3 penalty to saving throws. In addition, Boccob can sculpt any spell's area of effect into any shape.

Once per round, in lieu of spellcasting, Boccob can create a copy of any magical item (except for artifacts or relics) that has ever existed anywhere on Oerth. Such items exist for only 24 hours before vanishing unless Boccob chooses to make them permanent. Boccob rarely gives items to mortals, as he prefers they create their own unique magical artifices. If he so chooses, Boccob's touch has the effect of a *rod of cancellation*. Likewise, the Archimage can cast *stabilize* or *wildwind* at will.

Other Manifestations: Boccob rarely appears in avatar form in the Flanaess, preferring to employ his servant Zagyg the Mad. Likewise, the Archimage of the Gods rarely manifests on Oerth.

When the Lord of All Magics does manifest, he commonly appears as a nimbus of flickering, purple light which envelops a magical item or a spellcaster in an effect similar to *faerie fire*. Magical items enveloped in Boccob's aura undergo the effects of an *Azundel's purification* (as the 7th-level wizard spell detailed in Volo's Guide to All Things Magical) spell. Spellcasters in Boccob's web of flickering magic regain any one spell of their choice that they cast within the last 24 hours, assuming they have an empty slot of the appropriate level.

Boccob is served by crystalmists, golems, greyhawk dragons, pseudodragons, will o'wisps, and wizshades. The discovery of unique flowers or roses of unusual hue is considered a sign of his favor, as is the discovery of dweornite gems (see Iuz the Evil) and other magical jewels. The arrival of a disenchanter, hakeashar, laraken, or nishruu is considered a manifestation of his wrath. ❑

Conventions

Featuring Network Sanctioned Tournaments

DREAMATION
When: Jan 29-Feb 1 **Where:** Newark, NJ–Holiday Inn Jetport
What: RPGA LIVING CITY™, LIVING DEATH™, Call of Cthulhu, Shadowrun, Star Wars, and more.
Cost: Contact for details
Contact: Frank Timar, 101 Yorktown Dr., Mt Laurel, NJ 08054

BASHCON
When: End of Feb **Where:** Toledo, OH–University of Toledo Student Union
What: AD&D, Living City, Star Wars, Virtual Seattle, Paranoia, more!
Cost: contact for details
Contact: Steve Brindle at: sbrindle@top.eng.utoledo.edu

GAMER'S CON IV
When: Mar 20-22 **Where:** Cherry Hill, NJ–4 Points Inn
What: guest: Jason Alexander Behnke, first run LIVING CITY, LIVING DEATH Interactive. Open "Lords of Gaming" contests. Artists, auction, computer games, more!
Cost: $30 pre-reg, $40 at door.
Contact: Heleen Durston 732/657-3311 http://www.multigenre.com

TWINCON '98
When: May 22-25 **Where:** Bloomington, MN–Thunderbird Hotel
What: 5 LC events, 4 first-run, related; a mini-interactive for LC (featuring the wedding of two well-known adventurers), LD and DL events, other RPGA games.
Cost: contact for details
Contact: Erik at 612/944-6344 website: <http://io.com/~gorta/rpga/>

CON OF THE NORTH
When: Feb 20-22 **Where:** St. Paul, MN
What: eight Network events including 5 LC (3 first-run!), one LD, one AD&D, and one ToL. One lucky LC player goes home with a one-of-a-kind reward!
Cost: contact for details
Contact: 612/574-7594 email: rbrill@d.umn.edu http://www.io.com/~gorta/rpga

WINTER FANTASY GAME CONVENTION '98
When: Feb 26-Mar 1 **Where:** Rosemont, IL–Ramada Plaza Hotel O'Hare
What: Want to hone your gaming skills? Join us for the return of the Winter Fantasy Game Convention. With over 20 new RPGA events and dozens of seminars, demos, and tournaments, and the **NEW** RPGA Judge Training Program, this con has something for everyone! Guests include Jean Rabe, William W. Connors, Rich Baker, Mike Selinker, and more! This con is coming up soon, and yo don't want to miss it!
Cost: $30 pre-reg, $35 at door. 1-day pre-reg $12, $15 at door
Contact: Andon Unlimited at 1-800-529-EXPO to request a free pre-registration book or e-mail us at: <Andon@aol.com>

GAMES ON THE HORIZON II
When: May 29-31 **Where:** Portage, IN–Days Inn
What: RPGs, TCGs, LARP, minatures, board games, demos, more! Guests: Ken Whitman, Lester Smith, Tony Lee, Don Perrin
Cost: $15 pre-reg tillMay 1, then $20
Contact: Games II, Box 1602, Portage, IN 46368, <conman1@gte.net>

GAMICON THETA
When: Feb 20-22 **Where:** Iowa City, IA –at the National Guard Armory
What's Happening: RPGs, board games, miniatures, auction, RPGA events, M:tG, RoboRally Benefit, more. Guest: James Ernest of Cheapass Games. FREE SODA all weekend!
Cost: contact for details
Contact: Gamicon Theta 319/626-3153 http://www.sflis.org/gamicon

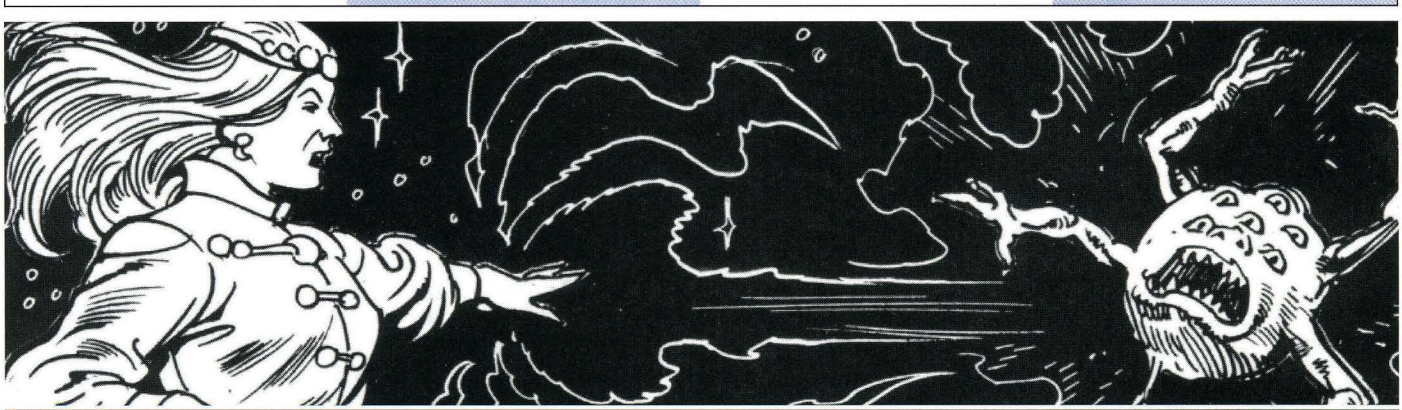
MILWAUKEE SUMMER REVEL
When: Jun 5-7 **Where:** Milwaukee, WI–The Inn Towne Hotel
What: guests: Gary Gygax, Janet Pack, Tom Wham. First-run events, LIVING CITY, LIVING JUNGLE™, CoC, BOOT HILL, Paranoia, minis. M:tG, Wham-a-Thon, more!
Cost: $20 pre-reg
Contact: Bruce Rabe, Summer Revel, PO Box 779, New Munster, WI 53102

COSCON
When: Feb 27-Mar 1 **Where:** Butler, PA –Days Inn
What: Living City, benefit, TCGs, board games, sci-fi, historical, and fantasy games, miniatures, freeforms, dealer room, computer room, movies, more!
Cost: $15 till Feb 15, then $20
Contact: send SASE to Circle of Swords, Box 2126, Butler, PA 16003.

MEGACON 98
When: Mar 13-15 **Where:** Orlando, FL–Orlando Expo Center
What: Hundreds of tournaments and demos. 100,000 sq. ft. of exhibit hall and gaming area. Fantasy art show and auction. 200+ guests!
Cost: $12/day, $30/3-day pass
Contact: www.blueearthpress.com/megacon/

EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN '97
When: Mar 27-29 **Where:** Carbondale, IL–Southern Illinois University
What: RPGA events, AD&D, Shadowrun, A&A, Warhammer 40K, M:tG, other card, RPG, miniatures, and board games.
Cost: $10 pre-reg, $12 at door
Contact: Joel Nadler at 618/529-4630 or email: ECGamCon@aol.com website: www.siu.edu/~gamesoc

COGCON
When: Sep 25-27 **Where:** Rolla, MO
What: RPGA AD&D, CoC, Earthdawn, Living City, Living Death. Also In Nomine, GURPS, Warhammer, Champions, minis, Star Fleet Battles, M:tG, Star Wars TCG.
Cost: $10 pre-reg, $13 at door. special rates for single day and TCG-only.
Contact: 573/368-4263, website: <www.rollanet.org/~cogcon>



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OUT OF PRINT AD&D/D&D bought and sold. Email: <nemesis@magepage.com> for list or send want/for sale list to: Jason Zavoda, 2313 St. Francis St., Wilmington, DE 19808.

LOOKING FOR PLAYERS and DMs in the southeastern New England area to form a gaming group. I play AD&D, Shadowrun, and Star Wars. Also interested in wargames. Players must be mature, no hack 'n' slash. If interested, call 508/995-7089 or write David "Bryon" Kuehne, 5 Beechwood Dr., Acushnet, MA 02743-1880.

VIRGINIA: I am looking for a few nice people in the Carroll Co. area who are looking for others for a gaming group. I've not had anyone to play with for a couple of years. if you are interested call Matt at 540/398-2820 or e-mail me at <adulin@hotmail.com>. I am mainly a DM but every once in a while I like to play as a character. Looking for people who like AD&D (of course), the SAGA™ system, and would help me figure out Immortal and Everway.

WINTER FANTASY ROOMMATES WANTED I'm traveling to Chicago from Denver for the WINTER FANTASY show and want some people to share a room with Thursday through Saturday Night. If you're interested, please contact me ASAP. Scott O'Bryan–tel: 303/410-0306; Add: 8034 Jellison St., Arvada, CO 80005; email: <DarkArena@aol.com>.

LOOKING FOR people in the Johnstown or Cambria county areas who would like to join the RPGA® Network and start a club in the next couple of months. Write: Jesse K. Blough, 620 Wynn Ave., Apt. 620, Johnstown, PA, 15906-1448 or call: 816/536-1907.

CHICAGO: Anybody who is interested in forming a gaming group in Oak Park contact Joseph Zarebski at <iamforever@writeme.com> or call 708/863-6773.

WANTED: DRAGON® Magazine numbers 37 or before. Dungeon® Magazine numbers 1-6, 8, 21, 31, 39-43. POLYHEDRON® numbers 1-49, 53, 56. GREYHAWK® module WGS1: Five Shall Be One, UK5: Eye of the Serpent. Send price or list to: Richard L. Hall, 13698 Walnut St., Southgate, MI, 48195-1813. Fair prices please, prices negotiable.

WANTED: SPELLFIRE® chase cards: FORGOTTEN REALMS 16, 19, 20. Dungeons 10 (2), 12, 14 (2), 16, 18 (2), 19, 21 (2), 22 (2), 23 (2). Lots of cards for trade. Out of print Spellfire boosters and starters for sale also. Contact: Howard Dawson, c/o Sibley Lumber Centers, 25212 Harper Ave., St. Clair Shores, MI, 48081; 810/772-2020 (day) or 313/885-0705 (night).

COLORADO: A new gaming club is forming in Denver is looking for members interested in helping out the gaming community and having fun. We are planning monthly LIVING CITY events, bi-monthly LIVING DEATH, as well as a con in 1998. If you're interested please contact Scott "The Axe" O'Bryan at 303-410-0306; mail: 8034 Jellison St., Arvada, Colorado 80005, or email: <DarkArena@aol.com>.

WANTED: beginner or advanced set, accessories, modules from

Classifieds...

PBM: Dragonslayers Unlimited is inviting all gamers around the country and around the world to join our unique gaming club. For more information contact: Jason Sizemore, 1020 Valley View Ave., Morgantown, WV 26505.

MAINE WANTED: contributors to the Shadow Glacier Newszine. It will be mostly devoted to the world of GREYHAWK® and FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign settings. Looking for new magical items, spells for bards, dragonmagic, fantasy stories, short adventures, and new creatures. First issue should already be out. Please indicate if you want to be included on the UMF Table Gaming Club mailing list. Write: Kenneth McDonald, P.O. Box 63, North Monmouth, ME 04265.

ATTENTION: Long time gamer looking for good condition copies of the following modules and boxed set: Time of the Dragon (Details Taladas), S3 Expedition to the Barrier Peaks (with illustration booklet), and S1 Tomb of Horrors (green cover). I will take any reasonable price. Write: Jeffrey Williams P.O. Box 16003 Las Vegas, Nv 89101, call: 702/547-6981 and leave a message or email: <devilboy@anv.net> or <williaj9@nevada.edu>.

WANTED: Any or all FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting items, novels or materials. The older the better. Send a list w/prices (will buy or trade) to: Anthony Thomas, Box 3092, PSC#3, APOAP 96266.

WHITE KNIGHT, an independent fantasy, sci-fi, and miniatures gaming magazine is looking for writers, reporters, and artists. For more information or a free sample issue, write to: Unicorn Pegasus Productions c/o Bill and Claire Brierton, 12420 Old Colony Dr., Upper Marlboro, MD 20772-5000.

ATTENTION ROLEPLAYERS: My name is David Sloan, and I am the writer and creator of STRPS (the Simple, Transgenre Role Playing System). This roleplaying system is designed to make it possible for your characters from any fictional genre to interact with each other. Writers can use this system to design their own roleplaying products without any interference from me. For details contact: David Sloan, 320 S. East Ave., Waukesha, WI, 53186.

TWO MILLENIA AGO, the Empire of Netheril came crashing down. Tomorrow, it rises again. For info, email: <saraphim43@hotmail.com>.

FOR SALE: Every first edition hard cover. 100+ modules, accessories, boxes for the D&D®, AD&D, SJ, and first edition GAMMA WORLD® games. DRAGON and DUNGEON mags. First edition Chill and Rolemaster in boxes, other games by Avalon Hill, GDW, SPI, more. Will consider trade. email: <Bscha51586@aol.com> Write: Erik K Cobbs, 91-204 Wakamalii Pl. Kapolei, HI 96707.

MICHIGAN: seeking gamers or existing gaming groups in the South Lyon area (east of US 23, south of I-96). If you are looking for a new friend or zany addition to your group, please contact Edward at 248/446-1006 or <af696@traverse.lib.mi.us>.

GENERAL: Opinionated know-it-all wants to "discuss" AD&D, D&D, and other subjects with others of "Firm, well-rounded convictions." Runaway typewriters and divergent opinions preferred, but all letters answered. Write: David Carl Argall, 1300 Ballista, La Puente, CA 91744

ATTENTION: Long-time player looking to buy old module, L2: The Assassin's Knot. Contact: Jeffrey Williams, P.O. Box 16003, Las Vegas, NV, 89101. or <devilboy@anv.net>.

James Bond, and the TOP SECRET, STAR FRONTIERS, and GAMMA WORLD games. Send descriptions and asking prices to "JubJub" c/o J.M. Winn, 1600 Garland St. #2, Lakewood, CO 80215

KENTUCKY: My name is Steven Moore, I am an African-American student interested in starting a Network club in the Richmond area. I have been a DM for four years, and have experience with the Forgotten Realms and Ravenloft settings, Rifts, and Robotech. Please email: <STUSTMOO@acs.eku.edu>.

WANTED: the following TSR products, either in shrink-wrap, or never having been used/privately owned: FOR4: The Code of the Harpers; FRS1: The Dalelands, Sword of the Dales, The Secret of Spiderhaunt; DMGR5: Creative Campaigning; DSS2: Air Earth Fire Water, Thunder Rift, House of Strahd, Van-Richten's Guide to Vampires. Contact: John Suter, 8 Spring Hill Ct., Randolph, NJ, 07869; 973/361-8986 (before 10 PM). Will pay handsomely.

Note: As a member service, POLYHEDRON® Magazine cannot accept classifieds advertising retail establishments.

Play. Test.

by Frank Carver

You want to write an RPGA tournament. You've got a detailed background, a neat plot, cool characters, and more boxed text than you know what to do with. You've spent weeks writing it all down.

But will "they" like it? Will it be accepted by the Network? Will convention organizers order it? Will players enjoy it? How can you know?

The answer is playtesting. It's as enjoyable as writing in the first place, and can make your good idea great.

Playtesting an adventure is not just playing it. In normal play, you ignore problems and get on with having a good time. In a playtest, the aim is to find problems to fix before the game is played "for real."

Gather players from your local area, or run an impromptu game at a convention. Try to get a wide selection of players from many different backgrounds and levels of experience. It's even better to get someone else to run the game while you observe, if possible.

Usually, running a scenario two or three times is enough to find holes, especially with creative and experienced players. At the end of each run (or whenever a major problem arises) ask for opinions and suggestions, and listen carefully. Make changes, and try again.

Write down detailed notes immediately, especially when playtesting at conventions. It's so easy to forget what happened, or lose that brilliant idea that occurred two hours into the game.

Finally, here is a playtesting checklist. Keep these aims in mind:

1. Check that the game is actually fun. I once wrote a scenario which seemed a great idea. Everything that happened was a false alarm or red herring. "What opportunities for roleplaying!" I thought. "What a waste of time!" they thought.

2. Check for loopholes. Players are devious, and will try to beat an adventure. Don't let your long, complex, murder investigation be solved in ten minutes by casting *speak with dead.*

3. Check that your scenario fits the available time. It can be hard to estimate how long a game might run, particularly with "multi-threaded" or "non-linear" adventures. Even with playtesting this can still be tricky, but putting a few groups through the mill will give you some idea.

4. Check for contentious rules interpretations. Concise descriptions in published rules often have multiple interpretations. Scenarios generally run more smoothly if these gray areas are avoided. The last thing a judge wants at a convention is to have to suspend the game to argue for a particular interpretation of the rules.

5. Check that your descriptions convey information simply and accurately. Ideas from your head should transfer easily to the referee and players, and not interrupt the flow of the adventure. Listen while someone else reads out your text, catch where they stumble, and note any possible confusion.

6. Check that your descriptions make sense to anyone who plays or runs the adventure. Your tournament might go anywhere in the world, and could be on the books for years. Remember that not all players are familiar with US culture and urban life. Most people in the world do not watch US television, don't know American geography or politics, and use a metric measurement system. Europe, for example, has no "city blocks."

7. Check that your scenario is complete and consistent. All necessities must be described, and judges must have enough background information to fill in gaps. Players are clever and might need to know if there are barrels in the cellar, or whether the Mayor has any cousins.

8. Check that the PCs make sense. Give everyone equal participation, and no reasons to ignore the adventure or work against other PCs. This is not applicable to LIVING™ campaigns, but is vital for a "classic" tournament.

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Playtesting for LIVING Campaigns

By Daniel S. Donnelly

For the past two years, at least 95% of LIVING CITY™ tournaments have been playtested prior to release. Unfair combat encounters, plot holes and many other hidden flaws were removed before most members even saw the event.

This year, the other 5% will be playtested too. Now, tournaments must be playtested prior to submission to RPGA HQ. This will allow the author to become involved in the tournament results and corrections. Why is this important? Because hearing the comments from the playtest groups will make an author's tournaments better and help new authors grow.

For instance, nothing is worse than a combat encounter that assumes something on the part of the group that might not be there. Assume that healing will be available, and PCs will die cursing your name. Playtesting will save characters, and your good name.

The playtest group's responsibility is to give an honest and detailed evaluation. If the module is poor, then don't just say it stinks, tell what is wrong and how it can be improved. Remember, a good evaluation includes the standard scenario score. With LIVING CITY modules, we decided that if the event scores less than a 7 average score per player that it needs more playtesting after the author works on it more.

Playtesters receive service points for their efforts. For Living campaign events, they get XP and treasure from the adventure after it is sanctioned. If you don't have a group to playtest, contact RPGA HQ or the campaign regional director to arrange for testing.

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